

ENGAGING ALUMNI

The Development and Implementation of Social Networks

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>In years past, university alumni in Finland were not seen as an asset. As times change, the increasing importance of alumni has become more apparent. Finnish universities are now struggling to try to keep their alumni engaged. Adding to the challenge is the fact that some Finnish University alumni live outside of Finland. The purpose of this study was to try to develop and implement a functioning network for the international business bachelor degree programme to keep ties with their alumni no matter their location. Among the questions were which channels to use, how many and how to set up the network for longevity.</p> <p>This was a one and a half year process that was constantly monitored and measured. Given the changing nature of the process and the personal involvement of the researcher, action research was applied. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The alumni network was connected using the framework and research of Forrester Research. After the network was connected, the first phase questionnaire was sent out. Its purpose was to examine the social media behavior of alumni and the networks they currently had in place as well as the ways in which they were utilizing those networks. Social media platforms, consisting of a blog, Facebook page, Twitter feed and LinkedIn group were allowed to run for over a year. In addition, an interview was conducted with the Harvard Alumni Associations Deputy Director in order to benchmark and discover how a successful alumni network functions. Metrics from each social media platform were observed over time to measure their success or failure as a suitable networking tool. After one and a half years had elapsed, a second phase questionnaire was sent out in order to measure how they really used the alumni network that had been in place and also to yield possible development ideas. The results of the second phase questionnaire were compared to actual metrics collected from the social media platforms.</p> <p>It was discovered that the framework used to connect the network was flawed. The results revealed that changes to the existing network were required. This included the addition of more traditional methods of communication as well as the removal of specific social media channels. The development of this fledgling network will continue in the light of research findings.</p>		
Keywords Networks, Alumni, Social Media, Forrester Research, Communication, Development, Engagement		
Miscellaneous		

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1 INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, University Alumni are seen as an asset; a group of staunch devotees that support their alma mater. In the USA, Alumni have been a part of university life for nearly 180 years but much has changed since the early years (Harvard Alumni Association). With the advent of global transport, modern modes of communication, globalization, and the EU softening the borders within Europe, the world is becoming more accessible and, in effect, smaller. This 'shrinking' of the world presents new challenges for universities and their alumni.

Due to this 'shrinking' world, would-be students no longer have to choose a university close to home. Students may travel abroad to study. Some choose to travel half way around the world to attend the school of their choice in their country of choice. What does this mean in the long term? It means that a good portion of graduates are no longer remaining in the vicinity of the universities they graduated from. This also means that alumni functions are changing, and indeed must change if they are willing to keep in touch with their alumni. With an increasing number of alumni from abroad, this means challenges in language, culture and distance for alumni associations. This is not a simple task, nor is it straight forward in nature.

In Finland, Alumni are not a widely exploited resource. One possible explanation for this is the differences in the way that Finnish Universities are financed in comparison to universities in the USA. The majority of funding for the two different types of higher education in Finland, Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences, comes from the government (Opetushallitus 2012, 42) and is based on the number of graduates per annum. This means that in Finland, the alumni no longer have any financial significance once they have graduated. Universities in Finland spend their time and resources focusing on the getting currently enrolled students to graduate.

In the United States, there are many different kinds of universities, each with their own funding needs. In contrast to the government funded education in Finland, universities in the USA are not rewarded for getting their students to graduate.

Postsecondary education defined

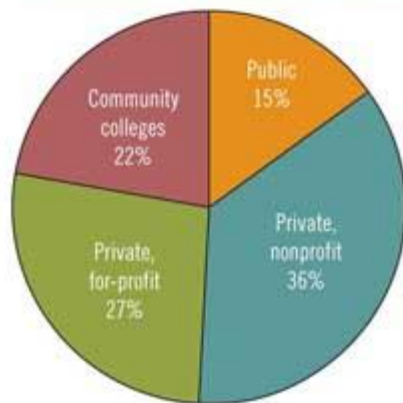


FIGURE 1. The different types of higher education in the USA (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities 2012)

State universities are partially funded by the state (government body), by tuition paid by students and by alumni donations. In the USA, alumni donations are extremely significant and are set to increase in importance. This is supported by the fact that college enrollments are falling in the USA, meaning that income from tuition is dwindling. (Okunade 1996)

Private schools do not receive government funding and must rely on tuition, alumni donations and careful investments, such as Harvard for instance (Shapiro 2011). It is easy to see why the alumni are such an asset for universities in the United States. In Finland, where Alumni are not seen as a source of revenue, why bother keeping touch?

1.1 What Other Universities Offer Alumni

Many universities in the USA have a strong Alumni following. Universities may go as far as calling their alumni family and rely on them for funding and support throughout their lives. Most people carry on a relationship with their alma maters long after graduation and even into retirement. They remain staunch supporters in any way they are able. This may be through donations, or by simply going to various sports events held by their alma mater.

Universities offer a variety of benefits for their alumni which may include: Online services, membership cards, dining discounts, library access, use of their facilities for

weddings for instance, gym memberships, event discounts, career planning and placements, networks, preparation for grad school, financial support through banks, insurance, travel benefits to name a few (USC Alumni Association n.d.). Most US universities have web pages specifically dedicated to their alumni including top schools like Harvard (Harvard Alumni Association n.d.). The list of services universities offer their alumni differs between schools but one thing remains clear: US universities see their alumni as an asset and go to great lengths to keep them actively involved.

Some Finnish Universities have also begun to recognize their alumni. One such school is the University of Helsinki. They have their alumni pages in English and encourage their alumni to be involved. They also have dedicated alumni coordinators and staff listed (University of Helsinki 2012). While it is not as much as American Universities, it is certainly a start.

1.2 Alumni in Finland

Finnish University alumni are not a new phenomenon but are still in the early stages of development. The very first University of Applied Sciences Graduates started to emerge in 1997 and the first alumni networks were launched shortly after (Häkkinen 2008, 15). Generally both Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences approach their alumni relationships similarly but according to each universities own concepts (Häkkinen 2008, 2). This may include:

- Web pages; For example, the University of Helsinki has a fairly involved web page dedicated to the alumni (<http://www.helsinki.fi/alumnus/>) (University of Helsinki 2012) that encourages participation, contact and activity.
- Facebook pages
- Twitter Feeds (The University of Helsinki is strongly represented in Twitter with 1,972 followers.)
- Trips, Lectures and Other activities. Such activities are offered by the University of Tampere for instance.

1.3 JAMK International Business Degree Alumni

What happens to JAMK alumni after they leave the safety of the educational environment? How did their years at JAMK form them and affect their ability to work and how to keep them involved in JAMK for years after graduation and why?

Currently, little is known about the whereabouts of JAMK International Business Alumni. Basic demographic information exists in JAMK's own information systems (ASIO) but the information is incomplete or out of date. The head of the International Business Degree programme originally wanted information about the IB alumni for EPAS certification. What resulted was a realization of a deeper need to contact our Alumni and find a way to keep them in the fold in addition to finding out their current standing in the working world.

A Need Due to a Change in Strategy

During 2012, JAMK overhauled its strategy, stressing an importance on three key areas: Internationalization, Entrepreneurship and Quality.



FIGURE 2. Internationalization as a part of JAMK's strategy (JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2012)

This change in strategy was another factor showing the need for this research. IB graduates are inherently international due to the fact that about 50% of IB graduates live abroad or come from abroad. Keeping ties with IB alumni would help build ties to companies abroad building a stronger business network outside of Finland.

Keeping the alumni involved not only helps build networks but helps JAMK keep their finger on the pulse of today's business world. These benefits cover two of the three key strategic points; Internationalization and Entrepreneurship.



FIGURE 3. Entrepreneurship as a part of JAMK's strategy (JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2012)

1.4 What JAMK Currently Offers Alumni

It is not entirely surprising that the alumni are not seen as an asset in Finland. The difference between the US university system and that of Finnish higher education mainly consists of the way education is funded. The Universities based in the USA, however, learned long ago that the value of the alumni runs deeper than their pockets.

On average, 87% of US alumni believe that value and respect for their degree either significantly or critically impacts their opinion of their alma mater. A further 75% say it is also about the accomplishments of students and 72% tie it to the accomplishments of faculty. Based on this knowledge we can assume that there is a relationship between alumni and the perception of a university. (Shoss 2009)

In addition to helping the perceptions of JAMK, keeping the alumni in the fold may also bring their ties to the working world, new trends and new ideas. The challenge: how can the International Business Degree Programme at JAMK keep their alumni engaged? This thesis does not attempt to cover the entire JAMK alumni, but only looks into the IB Alumni. Taking JAMK in its entirety would be far too broad a subject to cover in detail.

JAMK has made attempts at keeping track of their alumni but efforts have fallen short in recent years. A database was created to keep track of alumni but there is no one to oversee it. The information contained in the database is out of date. Plans have been made to update the system but no action has been taken as of yet.

Alumni activities are few and far between. If any alumni activities take place, they take place locally in Jyväskylä and are generally held in Finnish. This excludes the alumni that live outside of Finland and/or do not speak Finnish. No specific benefits are offered to the alumni other than the chance to use JAMK's libraries. It would seem that once a student graduates from JAMK, they are no longer financially beneficial to JAMK and are soon forgotten. In fact one might surmise that alumni are seen as a cost or burden. One might make this assumption by observing the way alumni matters have been taken care of at JAMK during 2012. This information was attained by talking with the person that was taking care of alumni matters. She is no longer employed at JAMK.

- Little or no resources allotted for alumni matters
- The alumni database exists but has been abandoned
- Some JAMK employees tried to support the alumni in addition to their normal work. After these employees left JAMK their efforts were dropped.
- Alumni efforts have not been an active subject during management meetings unless something was needed from alumni (EPAS).

1.5 Research Questions

Though JAMK Alumni may not currently financially support their alma mater as is the custom in the USA, there are other ways JAMK alumni can support JAMK. JAMK Alumni can provide information on the current job market, working methods and upcoming trends. They can act as guest speakers and authors. Yesterday's graduates are now today's experts. This kind of expertise is especially useful considering the recent changes in JAMK's overall strategy. JAMK has three pillars in their strategy which are Quality of Learning, Entrepreneurship, and Internationalization (JAMK University of Applied Sciences 2012). As Internationalization is one of the three pillars, keeping in contact with the JAMK alumni living abroad may be an excellent way to implement a part of JAMK's overall strategy.

JAMK could certainly offer some of the benefits that their US counterparts offer as seen listed under 1.1. Not all of the above listed benefits like, gym access would benefit the alumni living broad but JAMK could offer other services such as free

webinars or access to data. With the changes in funding coming in the near future, JAMK could also use additional outside sources of funding. Could JAMK not turn to its alumni for donations?

JAMK's International Business Degree Graduates are not typical for Finland. More than half of the IB alumni do not live in Finland and more than half do not speak Finnish. JAMK does not invest much time or energy in their alumni. Given these differences the main and sub-research questions are:

- How can a university keep their alumni engaged despite their distance?
 - How can engagement be understood in terms of alumni?
 - Which are the proper channels for alumni network communication?
 - How many channels are adequate for alumni communication?
 - How can these channels be maintained over time?

This thesis seeks to present and discuss the current whereabouts and status of JAMK's international business alumni, aspects of building an Alumni network using traditional methods, new and social media, social media behaviors and connectivity, and the reasons for building the network. An interview with the Harvard alumni network was also conducted as a method of bench marking and to discover how Harvard, a top university, relates to their alumni. The thesis will conclude with my assessment of the results. In order to narrow down the study, the International Business Degree Programme at JAMK University of applied sciences in Finland was used as a model.

It is hoped that this research will also aid other Universities in keeping their alumni in the fold. It is important to understand that the goal is not to provide a model that will fit every situation for it is the authors' opinion that such a model does not exist. The dynamics in culture, universities and age are far too broad to create a simple one size fits all model.

This thesis will first attempt to define networks and engagement as they pertain to this thesis. This thesis will then look at JAMK alumni both outside and inside Finland. The framework used as a jumping off point is described as well as the methods used throughout the process. The results of this year long process are laid out towards

the end and then finally discussed giving some insight to possible actions that might be taken to keep the alumni engaged in the future.

2 NETWORKS AND THE ROLES THEY PLAY

Networking is a part of everyday life, no matter the culture, age or even life form. This highly connected world is fairly new to humans. Before the advent of the modern communications, people were separated by continents. It was easy to lose the connections once people moved. Distances can now be bridged more easily with the help of the internet, social media, and e-mail.

As people, we are now all connected. In this worldwide network where all people are linked, it is guaranteed that there is a path between any two people. We keep in touch because we can. This world of ours is shrinking because those links and networks that would have died out before modern communication technology was invented can now be kept alive and easily activated. (Barabási 2003, 18, 39)

This thesis focuses on two particular networks; those being a network of people, namely JAMK alumni and online networks utilizing social media (Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and blogs).

2.1 Ties Between People

Ties between people can be strong, weak or absent (Granovetter 1973). It is these ties that are of interest in this thesis. Some ties are already in place when we look at friendships of alumni. These ties exist without the help of their alma maters. If we see each person as a node, a point at which others are connected, they make up a network. Figure 4 shows a very simple visual representation where nodes A, B, C, D, and E represent people and simple connections. We know that connections between people are rarely this simple and straightforward.

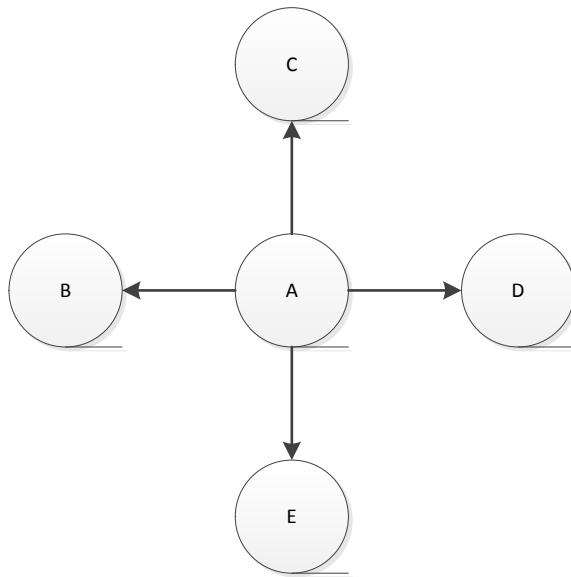


FIGURE 4. Simple visual representation of people as nodes in a network

Barabasi, 2003 argues that in connections between people, some individuals have more connections than others. They are people that are able to network very effectively and they, in effect, become hubs. Let us take Figure 5 as an example. Figure 5 is actually the hub map for Delta Airlines but works very well in describing network connections between people. In this instance, each red dot represents a person. The red lines between dots represent connections between people. Those dots/people with the most red lines are considered hubs. These “hubs” in networks are critical for maintaining a network. In the case of people, however, these “red lines” span the globe and are not singular to the USA.

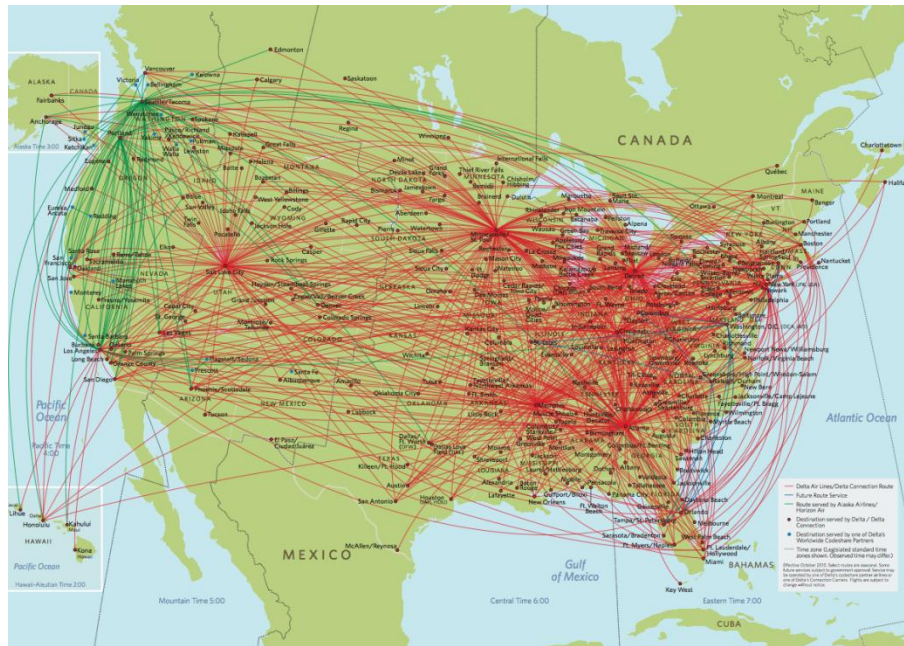


FIGURE 5. Delta Airlines hub map as representation of hub connections between people (Johnson 2010).

These connectors or hubs may play a vital role as the alumni network grows as most connections will go through them. Granovetter argues that the real value in a network lies in its weak connections. It is through these weak connections that the alumni network might draw its strength especially when talking about opportunities for new employment and networking possibilities (Granovetter 1973, 1373).

Weak Ties

When speaking of weak ties, we are concerned with connections between people. The strength of a connection can be defined by the relationships intensity, how much the two people confide in each other and by the amount of services they offer one another (Granovetter 1973, 1361). Weak ties are important because in order to move outside of one's own circles, one must turn to one's outer circles (Barabási 2003, 43). The majority of ties are weak and most benefits professionally are through these weak ties. Many people find work through marginal contact, an old college friend or previous employer. Ties generally were not very strong in the beginning. These people may have never met one another face to face (Granovetter 1973, 1372). The same may be said of alumni ties. These weak ties may benefit the alumni networks, not only for the alumni themselves but also for the university in question.

By utilizing these “weak ties”, universities may find internships or thesis subjects for current students. New research subjects may also be discovered through alumni. Alumni may benefit each other through weak ties by finding new work or research opportunities.

2.2 Engagement

Networks exist but if those networks are going to be utilized, universities must ‘engage’ the alumni. If the goal is to engage the IB alumni and in turn engage JAMK then engagement must be defined. Engagement is a broad term in the English language and can mean many things. In this case we will use the simplest definitions (Merriam-Webster n.d.):

- to hold the attention of
- to induce to participate
- to bring together
- to bind to do something
- to begin and carry on an enterprise or activity
- to give attention to something

We can more simply define engagement as “Energy, involvement, and efficacy” (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004, 294). Engagement must work in both directions between the university and its alumni. In the case of JAMK and its alumni, engagement can be summed up in the following two statements:

- By how proactive both JAMK and alumni are
- By how committed each party is to benefitting the other

To engage the IB alumni, communication needs to be established. In effect, currently existing networks need to be utilized and added to.

2.3 Alumni Network Models

Institutions with the strongest alumni networks offer a variety of social and professional experiences in return for their support. Six things have an effect on the success of alumni efforts (Chou, Jordan and Kilpatrick 2004):

1. Duration of experience with the organization
2. Intensity of a participants experience with the organization
3. Type and selectivity of program
4. Age and similarity of its participants

Traditionally, running Alumni networks is not cheap. At Teach For America, there are six full-time employees overseeing 7300 alumni (Chou, Jordan and Kilpatrick 2004). The cost of keeping alumni engaged must be offset by the benefits of keeping the alumni active.

In order for alumni networks to work, the university must be involved. According to Simo Takanen, the executive director of the alumni organization of Laurea University of Applied Sciences, alumni networks are generally maintained in one of two ways. They can be maintained by the staff at the University, typically by the Marketing department, as is done by JAMK University of Applied Sciences and Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, or it is maintained outside of the university by a separate organization as is done, for example, at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. (Aarva and Alijärvi 2012, 18)

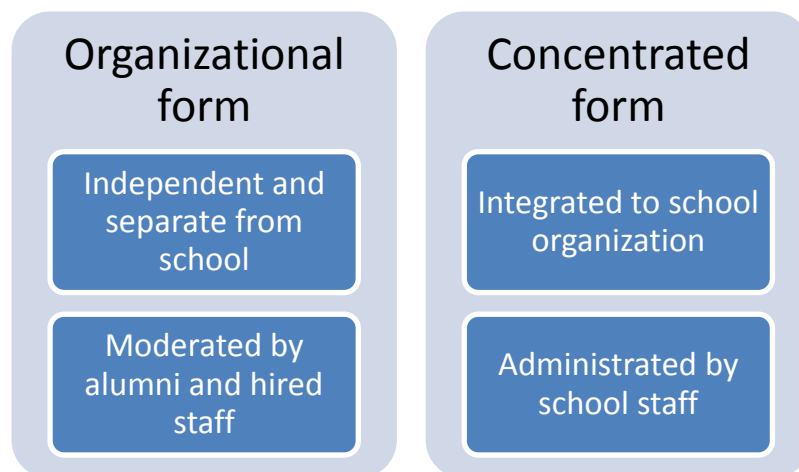


FIGURE 6. Organizational forms of alumni organizations (Aarva and Alijärvi 2012)

Bearing in mind the previous statements by Simo Takanen, Aarva and Alijärvi created the two alumni models in Figure 6. The first form, called the organizational form, is where the alumni activities are put into motion by an alumni association that operates separately from the university it represents. It is moderated by alumni and hired staff. The second form, called the concentrated form, is an integral part of the

university. Alumni activities are overseen by school staff and are usually regulated by the marketing department.

Marrying existing networks and alumni and defining modes of communication requires some direction. Social media would seem to be a sensible place to start. This is where Forrester research and its framework come in. Forrester research created a framework defining the different types of social media users as explained further on.

2.4 Ten Types of Social Media

“Social computing is not a fad. Nor is it something that will pass you or your company by. Gradually, social computing will impact almost every role, at every kind of company, in all parts of the world.”

- Forrester Research (Mayfield 2008, 3)

No matter how one looks at it, social media is, a major part of everyday life. It seems that there are as many terms as there are options in social media and it is easy to become confused. The first known use of the term “Social Media” began in 2004 with the inception of communities like FaceBook, Twitter and blogs.

Loic Le Meur, a web entrepreneur stated that "If the news is important it will find me." What he meant was that a person who is constantly connected and online, who blogs, Twitters, and reads his news through an RSS reader, can count on his network to let him know when something worth knowing comes up. (iCrossing 2009)

Given the distance of the IB alumni, social media and electronic sources of communication seemed to be the proper direction. As of 2011 there were many different types of social media to choose from. Figure 7 below shows some of the many different types of social media platforms available. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of platforms available.



FIGURE 7. Illustration of some of the social media platforms currently available (ESMM - Easy Social Media Marketing 2011).

Social media allows people to present themselves and maintain connections with others. These social media networks can be work oriented such as LinkedIn or more casual such as Facebook. People may use these networks to meet new people or to keep in touch with people they already know. (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007, 1143).

Though the list of social media tools is extensive, according to Forrester Research all of the social media tools listed in Figure 7 can be broken down into one of seven different types of social media (Mayfield 2008, 6). In Mayfield's document, he refers to only six types but he actually lists seven. They are:

1. Social Networks – Social interaction sharing updates, images etc. (Facebook, MySpace and Bebo)

2. Blogs – Basically online journals. (WordPress, Blogspot)
3. Wikis – User updated websites. It's a kind of encyclopedia updated by the people that use them. (Best known is Wikipedia)
4. Podcasts – Audio and Video Files (iTunes)
5. Forums/Message boards – Online discussion usually on a specific subject. Forums are the oldest form of "Social Media". Computer help web pages are often forums.
6. Content Communities – A place for sharing videos, or pictures. (YouTube, Flickr, Vimeo)
7. Microblogging – This is much like an online text message. The message has a limited number of characters much like an SMS. (Twitter)

2.5 Seven Types of Social Media Users

Forrester research has created what they call a social technographic data tool. It classifies consumers into six overlapping levels of social technology participation. In short it measures how different people participate in social technologies based on age, gender and location. You may notice that in Figure 8 there are only 6 types listed. The tool was created but then expanded with the additional of Conversationalists seen in Figure 9. The addition of conversationalists was to address the lack of a place for twitter (Bernoff 2010).

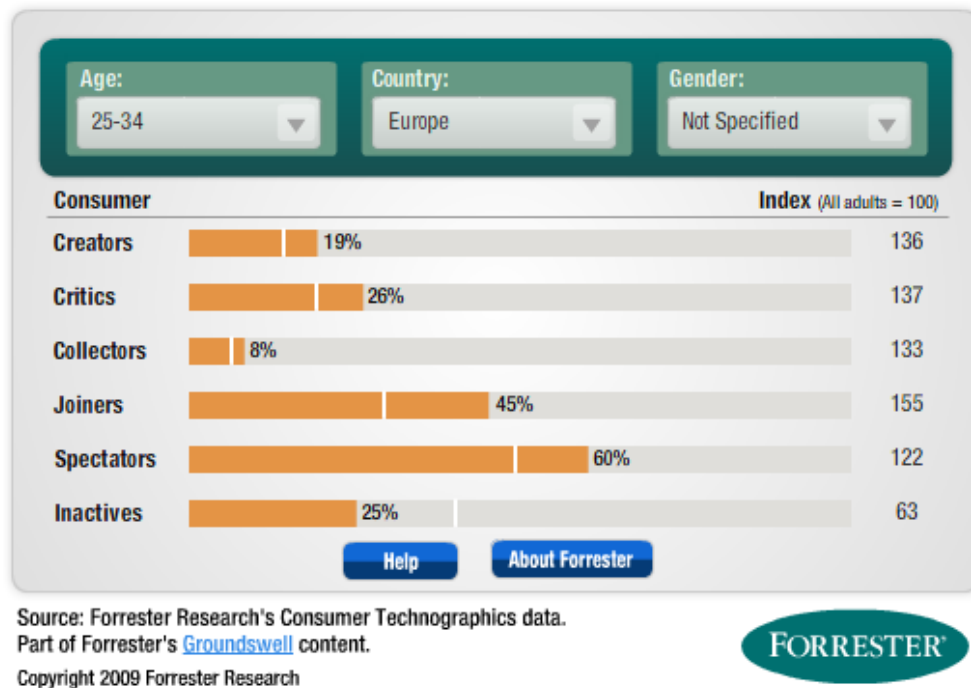
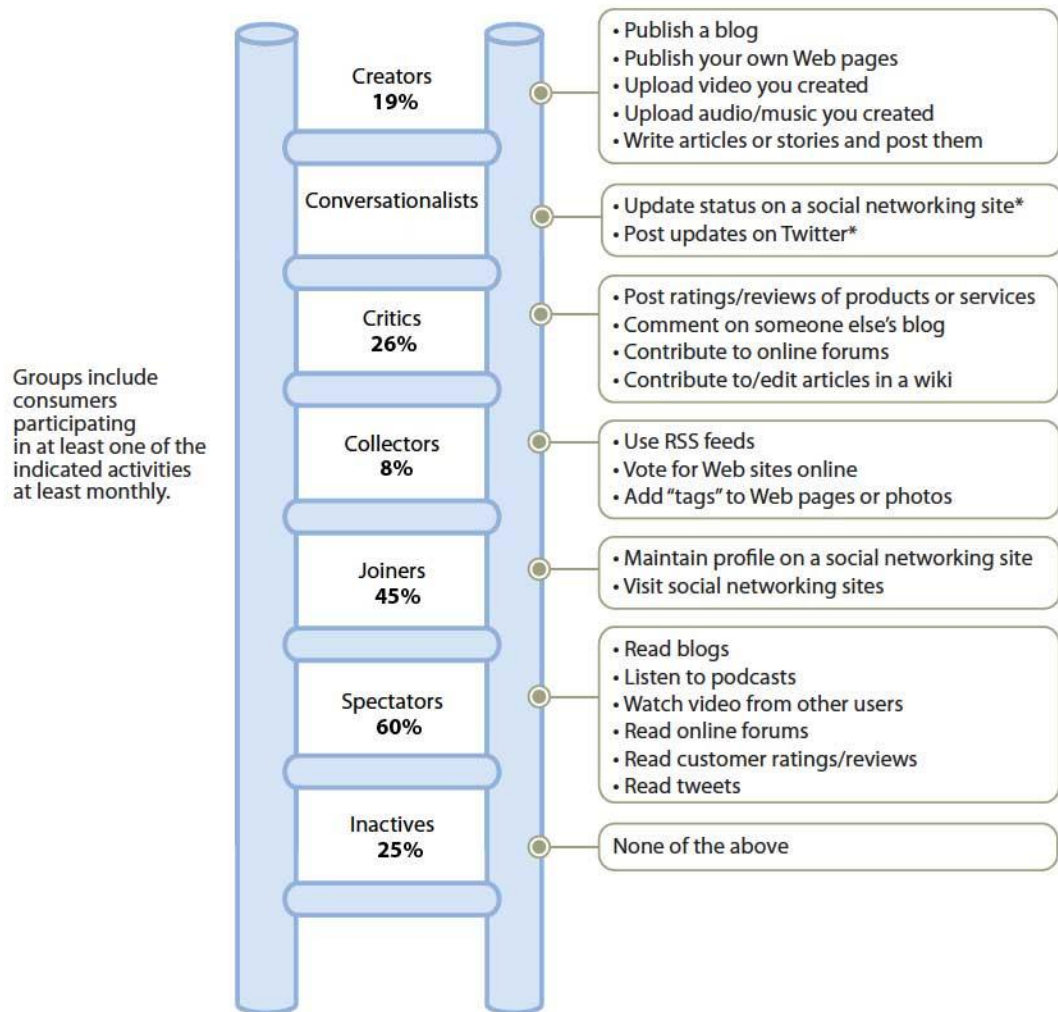


FIGURE 8. Forrester Research Social Technographic Behavior Tool (Forrester Research, Inc. 2011-2012)

Based on the data in Figure 8, a better understanding of the types of social media user can be gained. However, further explanation is needed to understand what to do with these percentages. Forrester gives more detailed explanations of each type of user in Figure 9. A person may be one or any combination of the following types of users. They often overlap.



*Conversationalists participate in at least one of the indicated activities at least weekly.

56291

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

FIGURE 9. Forrester Research's explanation for each type of Social media user (Bernoff 2010).

- **Creators** - Creators are the creative souls that create online content. Content may include one or any combination of the following: blog posts, web pages, videos and audio files.
- **Conversationalists** – Conversationalists update their status in social networking sites such as Facebook or twitter. They may do this with the help of an internet browser such as Internet Explorer, a mobile phone, iPod or other similar device. Current technology and internet connections available both at home and via mobile make updating possible from nearly anywhere.
- **Critics** – Critics review products and/or services, comment on blog posts, edit or add to wiki articles, or contribute to online forums. Critics are, in a sense,

similar to conversationalists but are focusing on third parties rather than making personal comments.

- **Collectors** – Collectors are link and information accumulators. They collect information using tools like Diigo (www.diigo.com) for instance. They may use RSS feeds. RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summery. RSS allows a user to stream site updates, newsletters and articles that interest the collector. (Ecommerce Web Hosting Guide n.d.) Collectors also add tags to photos or web pages.
- **Joiners** – Joiners want to be part of a group and will join and maintain one or more social media profiles in services like Facebook and Twitter.
- **Spectators** – Spectators read, listen and observe online content in general. This may include reading blogs, online forums, customer reviews, tweets, and listening to podcast or watching video.
- **Inactives** – Inactives do not engage in social media activities at all but may be online. They do not post or read any user-generated content. This type of user is becoming rarer as social media becomes increasingly integrated into websites (von Brockdorff n.d.).

The number of social media tools available is simply overwhelming. By categorizing the types of social media users, as in the list above, it allows a narrowing of the types of social media tools that might be utilized. Demographic information was gathered from ASIO (age and location) on the alumni and entered into the Forrester Research Technographic tool as shown in Figure 8 thereby categorizing the desired audience. This offered a good starting point from which the first version of the network could be built. This also allowed the structure of the first questionnaire to be created and truly being to measure alumni social media network usage.

3 METHODOLOGY

The process of creating a working alumni network is no simple matter. There is no one solution that suits all. There are several papers on alumni satisfaction and reasons for keeping alumni in the fold, etc. Each one uses a different approach with varying focal points. Some papers cover the importance of funding and others the importance of a brand. The challenges are too broad and intangible to be answered

simply. The author felt that the questions and solutions had to be built and then tested and altered over time. This research is both practical and personal as the author is also an IB alumnus. The results, in the end, were surprising and unexpected.

The questions to be answered are the following:

- How can a university keep their alumni engaged despite their distance?
 - How can engagement be understood in terms of alumni?
 - Which are the proper channels for alumni network communication?
 - How many channels are adequate for alumni communication?
 - How can these channels be maintained over time?

3.1 Immersive and Constantly Changing: Action Research

The framework offered up by Forrester Research offered an excellent springboard to build a network that would work over distance. This framework seemed feasible but needed to be tested. It was understood from the beginning of this research that the modes of communication would evolve and change over the course of time. Initially, because of its immersive nature and constant change, action research was the research method chosen.

Action research “aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science” (Rapoport 1970, 499). It aims to develop both solutions to practical problems and to develop knowledge for the research community (Mathiassen, Chiasson and Germonprez 2012, 348). Action research is an ongoing process and cyclical in nature which includes:

1. identifying a problem
2. Finding a course(s) of action
3. Choosing a course of action and executing
4. Evaluating
5. Identifying what was learned

Action research provides the possibility to connect theory and practice, often in combination with other research methods. Over the last thirty years action research has become more popular. (Mathiassen, Chiasson and Germonprez 2012, 348)

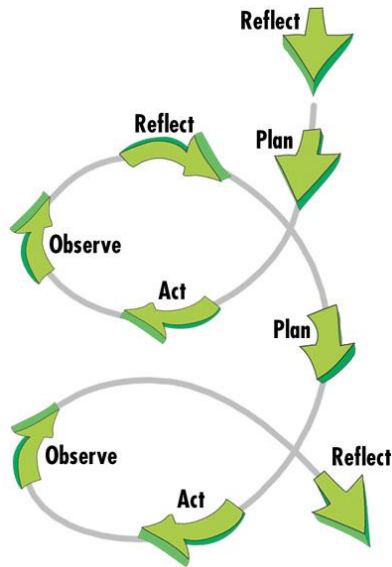


FIGURE 10. Action Research Cycles (Center for Enhanced Learning & Teaching 2012)

Unlike other modes of research, action research results may not be completely replicable over time. In fact the only certainty in action research is the process of change itself (Checkland and Holwell 1998, 11). In order to try and bring more certainty to the research, auxiliary methods were added in order to add depth and understanding. These include case studies, telephone interview and a second questionnaire as a follow-up. It was not enough to merely use a questionnaire to gauge the proper tools and methods.

To go one step further from the above figure, Figure 11 shows a more specific approach. Applying to this case, learning about JAMK and the challenges it faced regarding alumni activities led to finding a framework and deciding on a methodology that would eventually lead to a solution to the area of concern.

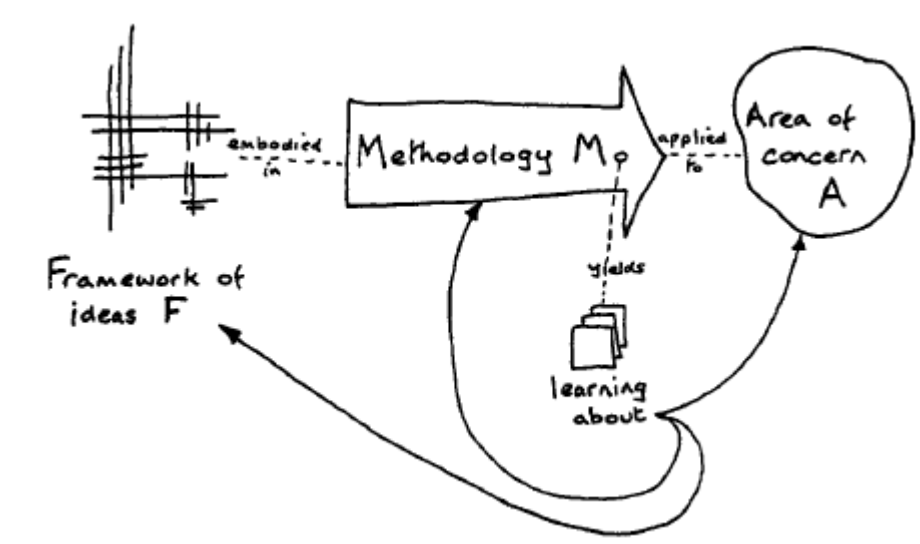


FIGURE 11. Elements relevant to any piece of research (Checkland and Holwell 1998, 13)

The case studies were used not only to see how universities are handling alumni communications but also as a means to narrow down this study to make this thesis more approachable. If one were to try to study all alumni in every country, it would be a task that would take too much time and be too broad in scale. A study on that scale might be a subject for a doctoral thesis.

The telephone interview was used to get one-on-one feedback that was more specific than could be gotten from a questionnaire. It gave some deeper insight into what well established alumni associations are currently doing.

The second phase questionnaire was used to make the action research come full circle. The first phase questionnaire opened up what kind of tools should be utilized. As data was collected on usage of each of the social media tools in use, the first phase questionnaire alone was deemed to be insufficient. The second phase questionnaire was needed in order to measure how actively the alumni were using the different channels. Data collected through Facebook, Wordpress and LinkedIn were not specific enough to tell whether or not the visitor is, indeed, an IB alumni.

As action research is cyclical in nature, it begs the question of how to exit the process. According to Checkland and Holwell, this is often overlooked when undertaking action research. They suggest the following process of action research.

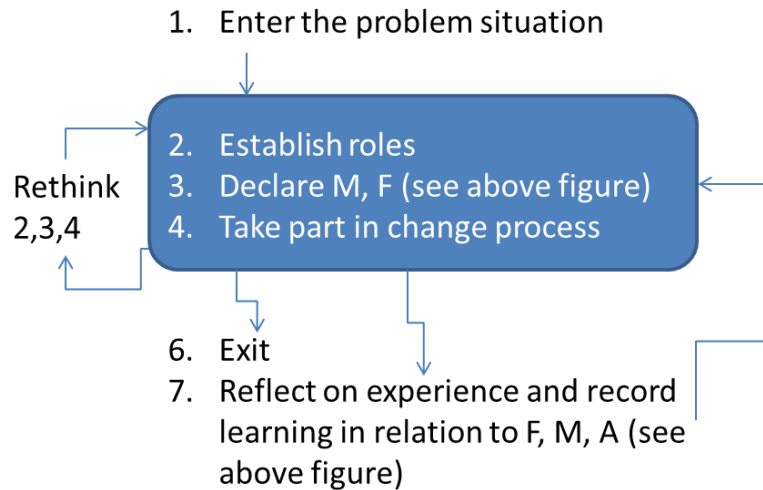


FIGURE 12. The process of action research (Checkland and Holwell 1998, 15)

It is also difficult to know when to exit the action research process. How does the researcher know when to stop? In this case, the exit is partly governed by external deadlines, both by JAMK University of Applied Sciences and the author's employment contract at JAMK. The termination of employment restricts the author's access to libraries, databases, staff and necessary tools to carry on this research.

3.2 Pre-build of a Functional Alumni Network

An attempt was made at the very beginning of the research process to create a functioning alumni network. The network was built based on the framework of Forrester research. According to their technodemographic tool the users in the target audience were:

- 60% Spectators
- 45% Joiners
- 26% Critics
- 25% Inactives
- 8% Collectors
- Unknown: Conversationalists

According to the framework laid out by Forrester Research specific social media platforms would be more successful than others. If the data holds true, the IB alumni

would be comprised largely of spectators. This type of audience should respond well to a blog.

Because Joiners were the next in line with 45 percent, a Facebook page seemed to be a logical choice. At the beginning of this research there were only six types of social media user. Sometime later, a seventh type of user was added called “Conversationalists” see Figure 9 on page 21 for a graphical representation. A twitter account was added simply because it was easy to attach to the other forms of social media that were already in place. These social media platforms were also chosen because of their global reach and popularity.

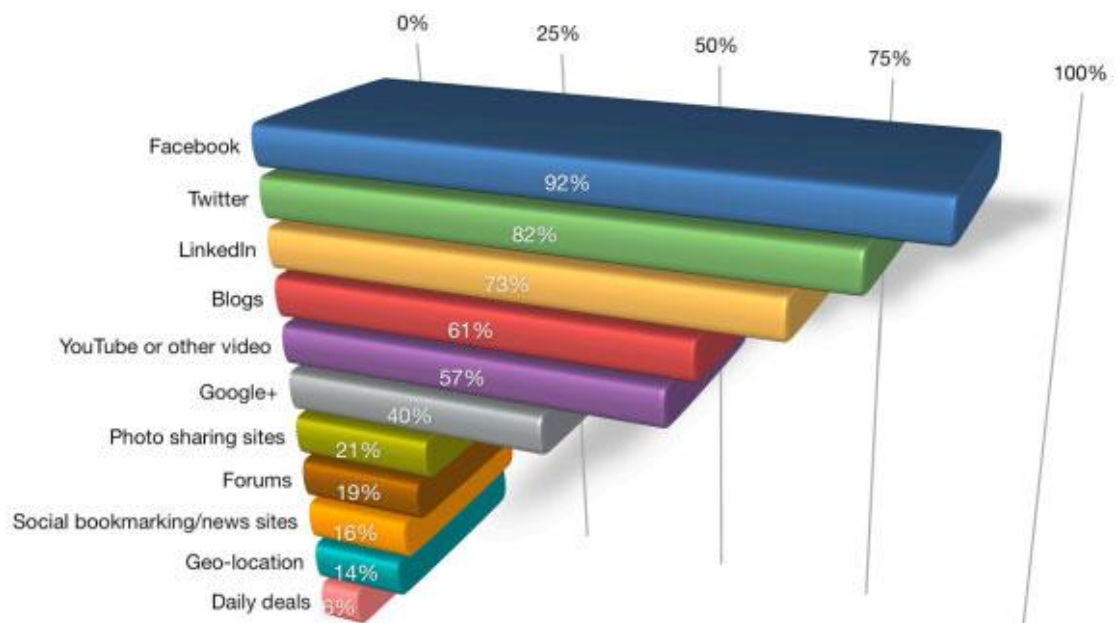


FIGURE 13. Commonly used social media tools (Stelzner 2012, 21)

IB Alumni were the main target of this research. According to ASIO, JAMK’s student database, the first IB graduates were shown as graduating in 2004. Approximately 50% of IB alumni are not of Finnish origin and live outside of Finland. According to the data in ASIO, the average age of JAMK alumni as of March 3rd, 2013 is 30 with the oldest being 54 and the youngest being 22.

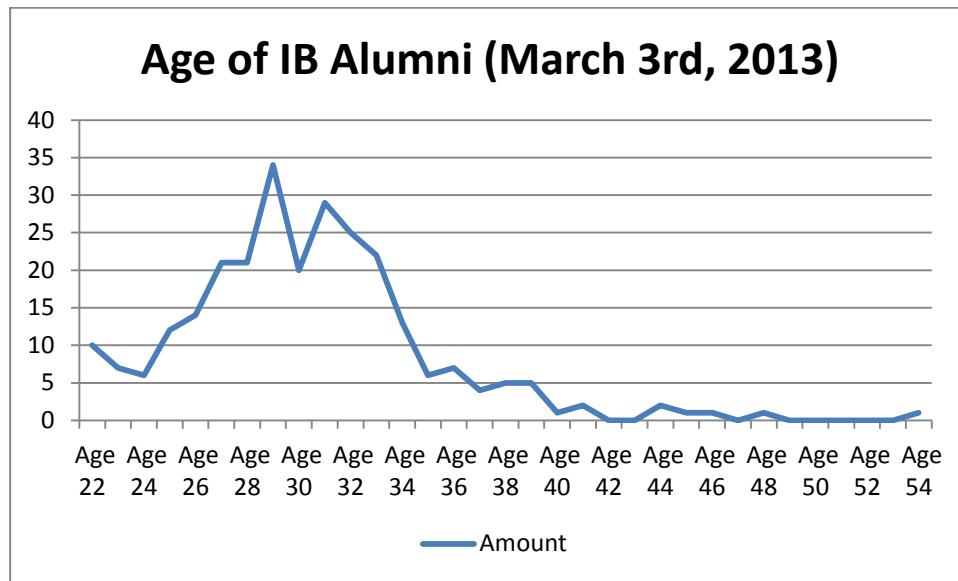


FIGURE 14. Age of IB alumni as of March 3rd, 2013

It is possible to see, in Figure 14, that the majority of alumni are more or less between the ages of 25 through 34. This age range was used in the Forrester Technodemographic tool seen in Figure 8 on page 20 to calculate which category of social media user for the IB alumni.

3.3 Social Media as a Medium for Communication

One objective was to build an alumni network using new media and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The challenge was to find the best way to reach the alumni while also fulfilling the needs for EPAS certification.

During the process of doing the research the author faced many of the same challenges that most companies face when setting out to use social media for their benefit. Even if one manages to set up a good system of disseminating information, how can one measure the rate of improvement? How can one gauge whether or not methods are successful? If the methods are not successful then how does one know when to stop and what to stop?

Once the system is up how does one ensure that the social media experience stays consistent and continues long after I no longer am its shepherd?

When it comes to strategy, what strategy and rules to adhere to? The alumni are no longer affiliated with JAMK yet they were once JAMK students and the name JAMK is

used in all implemented media. Is it wiser to stay with JAMK rules and strategy or can the rules be bent and keep the alumni network slightly outside the constraints of the JAMK hierarchy? These are all important questions when thinking in terms of longevity.

3.3.1 The Blog

The Forrester Research Technographic tool stated that the IB alumni are 60 percent spectators. Because of this fact, a blog was created. Blogs are open to all to read. It requires no password and the blog posts are searchable. Blogs are also highly connectable to other social media platforms.

There were three total possible choices to host the blog. They were Wordpress (www.wordpress.com), blogspot (www.blogspot.com) and JAMK's own installed version of Wordpress on JAMK servers. Blogspot was ruled out as ads were not desirable. Wordpress does not have ads, was easy to use and had a plethora of templates available.

A blog was created on the Wordpress service (www.wordpress.com) and given the address <http://jamkib.wordpress.com>. The conscientious choice was made not to open the alumni blog using JAMK's own blog server though they would be available to use and easy to implement. JAMK's blog server was rejected due to the following reasons:

1. The templates are extremely limited. It is very difficult to differentiate yourself from the rest of the JAMK blogs. There are only about 17 templates to choose from whereas there are hundreds direct from wordpress.com.
2. The features of JAMK's blog service are extremely limited. There is no possibility to add Facebook or twitter widgets. Wordpress widgets are tools or content that can be added, arranged, and removed from the sidebar(s) of a blog. Widgets allow one to customize the content of the blogs sidebar(s) (WordPress.com n.d.). Widgets are not to be confused with the 'share' function in the blog. The Twitter widget is named "Fresh Tweets". A small portion of the Facebook widget can be seen in the lower left corner of screen shot in the appendices.

3. There is no possibility to have subscribers.
4. Cannot make significant changes to the layout of the JAMK blog pages. The JAMK templates are very static with no options to affect basic layout changes.
5. The version of Wordpress that JAMK uses is an old version (3.3.1). The current working version available at Wordpress is 3.5. It is uncertain if and when JAMK will install a newer version. The older version limits usability.
6. Inflexibility to add outside users. In order to use the JAMK Wordpress, the user must have JAMK user credentials. This limits the number of alumni authors that could be added as authors/contributors.

It was for the above listed reasons that the blog was established outside of JAMK's own servers. JAMK marketing department personnel are aware of this and have asked that the blog be moved to JAMK's own servers but do not demand it. They have stated that in the future a newer version of Wordpress will be installed which will give the user more freedom. Another advantage of using Wordpress is that the blog can be moved in its entirety to the Wordpress installed on JAMK's server. One disadvantage to using Wordpress is the lack of continuity. If the originator of the blog decides to stop maintaining the blog, the blog will cease to be up to date. The administrator of the blog must conscientiously move it or give administrative rights to another. If the blog were on JAMK servers the administrators of JAMK's blog service could add or remove users easily.

Possible Metrics to Measure Blog Success

In order to know how successful something is, it needs to be measurable (Mathis 2013). There are several ways to measure the success of a blog. Some suggested blog metrics are (Evans 2010, 28):

- Number of subscribers to blog
- Ratio of comments to posts (how many comments are you getting for each post)
- Number of times posts are submitted to social news, social bookmarking, social networking, microblogging sites, etc
- Number of links to posts

There are certain drawbacks to these metrics however. It is possible to measure the overall success as a blog but not the success as an IB alumni communication tool using these techniques. It is not currently possible to know for sure if the people visiting the blog are IB alumni or not. This is one of the reasons the second questionnaire was created.

3.3.2 Facebook

Because joiners comprise 45% of the target audience, Facebook was the next logical choice after the blog. Facebook was launched in 2004 and is a one of many social media networking services that operates via internet browser. It is one of the most popular social media servicers. As of October 2012 Facebook had over 1 billion active users (The Wall Street Journal Europe Edition 2012). Registration is required and once registered, users may add friends, exchange messages and receive automatic notifications. Facebook allows users to keep in contact with friends and colleagues. In Facebook there are different ways of interacting; it is possible to interact as an individual or in a group/page.

Groups vs. Pages

Facebook groups and pages behave similarly. Pages are meant be used for official companies, brands or celebrities. Groups are meant for smaller groups of people that may share common interests. They can discuss issues, post photos or organize events. The group can be open or closed and always has one or more administrators. This would seem perfect for the alumni but the number of people allowed to be a part of the group is limited to 5000 (Smarty 2010). Members of the group can post into the groups news feed and other members can respond and interact.

Facebook Pages are meant to act as an official channel for businesses or official organizations. Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the internet by default. People can join the page and see any updates made in its newsfeed by 'liking' the page. (Pineda 2010) One downside to the Facebook page is that, even as the page creator, you do not have complete control over the page you have created. As the creator and administrator, you have no event messaging rights and have no ability to

add favorites to the page. The creator of the page must appoint a separate administrator (Smarty 2010).

3.3.3 Twitter

Twitter was chosen for its role as a channel for spectators and joiners. Twitter also covers the needs of conversationalists but at the time of writing this thesis there was no data on the percentage of conversationalists in Europe between the ages of 24 and 35.

Twitter was launched in 2006 and is considered a micro-blogging service. Micro-blogging is a sort of mini-blog consisting of messages about the length of a text message (140 characters or less). The user can let people know their whereabouts or latest thoughts using their smart phone, computer or tablet. Twitter is nearly as popular as Facebook. As of July 1st, 2012 Twitter had 517 million accounts (Lunden 2012).

User's register and then can choose to follow people, companies or groups that interest them. No permission is required to follow another user in Twitter. Once the user chooses to follow another user can see all of their updates.

Possible Metrics to Measure Twitter Success

As with the blog, it is possible to measure the overall success of the Twitter channel by using the following metrics (Evans 2010, 28):

- Number of followers acquired
- Real followers who hold conversations (not spammers)
- Number of replies you get to your tweets
- Number of retweets your tweets receive
- If you start a conversation around a hashtag, how much conversation happens (number of tweets)
- Positive and negative conversation
- Traffic to the website, web pages, blog, or blog posts from tweets.

3.3.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a service that focuses on professional connections and was chosen for just this reason. LinkedIn suits the Joiners, Spectators, and Conversationalists. It is used more for business connections and professional networking. It is similar to Twitter and Facebook but LinkedIn's strength lies in its professional connections. Every day status updates and personal news are the strength of Facebook. As of September 30th, 2012 LinkedIn is one of the world's largest professional networks with more than 187 million members in over 200 countries (LinkedIn Press Center 2012).

A member of LinkedIn can browse CV's, and join professional groups that interest them. Posts can be accessed via browser and edited via browser, SMS, e-mail or through smartphone application.

3.3.5 Diigo

Diigo is a social bookmarking service. It allows users to tag and bookmark web pages that interest them. A Diigo account was opened for JAMK IB Alumni with the thought of sharing interesting articles and webpages with IB Alumni. Diigo can be used to highlight text, pictures and create annotations and can be accessed via smartphone application or browser. It also has a toolbar that can be installed into the browser as an add-on. You can see a screen shot of the Diigo add-on in the appendices under screenshots.

The account is connected to the jamkibalumni twitter account. It was originally hoped to have Diigo directly publish interesting articles directly to the Wordpress blog at jamkib.wordpress.com. Though the account was created, little use has been found for the application it was intended for.

3.4 Simplification Through Connectivity

With a blog, Facebook page, twitter feed and LinkedIn page it was imperative to keep things simple. The solution was to connect all the accounts. By connecting each account it would reduce the amount of effort needed to keep all channels up to date. The Wordpress account would act as the mother of all, allowing any blog posts to filter down to the other social media platforms automatically.

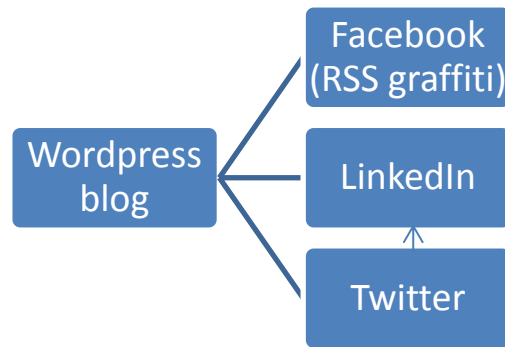


FIGURE 15. The automatic flow of information

Blog posts are automatically sent via RSS Graffiti (<http://www.rssgraffiti.com/>) to the JAMK IB Alumni Page. RSS Graffiti uses RSS feeds. RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication. RSS Graffiti allows one to take posts from several different platforms including video channels like YouTube, news sources or blogs for instance and post them into Facebook. Using RSS Graffiti, one is able to take content from several different sources and post them in Facebook in real time automatically.

Wordpress' connectivity with Twitter and LinkedIn is built in and is being utilized. Many of these connections work in both directions. If a Tweet is written, it automatically goes to LinkedIn and Facebook. Mainly the flow follows Figure 15. A blog post is written and automatically trickles down to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. By connecting these services in this way, it greatly simplifies the sharing process by allowing the dissemination of information from a single source.

3.5 Living Breathing Conversation

The goal was not to have this to be a one way conversation where information was being spoon fed to readers. The real goal was to create an open conversation spanning the globe turning readers into active participants. It had to be a living breathing thing for it to work. Getting people active is where the difficulty lies. Encouraging authoring is not enough; after all, a person's time is valuable. Not everyone has extra time to write, yet getting professional feedback would be one key to making this network interesting. This would turn out to be more difficult than anticipated.

3.6 First Phase Questionnaire

Now that the construct was set up, it was time to try to understand the real needs and behavior of the IB alumni regarding their use of social media. The first phase questionnaire was formulated using the EPAS certification standard as a guideline. In order to qualify for EPAS accreditation IB had to supply information on what the IB alumni were doing after graduation and the entry level salaries as well as their salary level currently (EFMD Programme Accreditation System 2011). The EPAS certification stood as a good reason for deeper probing.

A list of graduates was compiled using ASIO, JAMK's database of current and graduated students, and searching for HIB and HGB. HIB and HGB are codes specific to JAMK to identify International Business degree programme students and graduates. HGB was used until 2004 and was then changed to HIB due to changes in the curriculum.

Using these search parameters a list of 222 IB graduates was compiled. These alumni graduated between the years of 2004 and 2011. An e-mail was sent to each person on the list to check the validity. Of the 222, 57 e-mails were no longer valid. An attempt to contact each of the graduates whose e-mail address had resulted in a bounced e-mail was conducted by phone or via Facebook. The validity of phone numbers was checked through Eniro's directory services. Each graduate with a valid phone number was telephoned in order to try and secure a valid e-mail address. Some other alumni that predated 2004 were found through alumni connections. In the end, the questionnaire was sent out to 128 IB alumni. The response rate was 75% (96 out of 128 answered the questionnaire).

The number of IB alumni is fairly small. The International Business Degree programme turns out an average of 29 graduates per calendar year. The small number of alumni along with the amount of alumni that could not be reached explains the small sample. A 75% response rate is acceptable given the small sample size. To make the results of the questionnaire easier to measure, the questions were mostly closed in nature, with the addition of scaled questions to gauge importance of certain issues. Open questions were used at the end of the questionnaire. A questionnaire was chosen as the main vehicle because of distance between alumni

as well as cost issues. JAMK has a questionnaire service available for use. This service was inexpensive, fast and easy to use. In hind sight, more open questions might have been used to explore further possibilities to network. The survey covered more about their social media usage habits than anything else. The questions were quite limited in their range. Attention was paid to the respondents' privacy. Their contact information was never linked to the answers or given out to third parties without their express permission. The full survey can be seen in the appendices.

TABLE 1. Number of International Business Degree Graduates per year

Graduate Year	Number of IB Graduates
2004	35
2005	26
2006	28
2007	28
2008	26
2009	30
2010	28
2011	35
2012	30

3.7 Skype Interview with the Harvard Alumni Association

A one-on-one Skype interview was held with Kristen DeAmicis on October 24th, 2012. During the thirty-minute interview, a recording app called SkyRecorder was used to document the conversation. Upon playback of the file, it was discovered that the app had failed to record Kristen's voice. I immediately set to writing down what I remembered of the conversation. It was not possible to hold the interview again as Kristen DeAmicis has a very tight schedule. The first interview was scheduled weeks in advance. Unfortunately this means that the accuracy of the answers is subject to what I recall rather than recorded events. The interview questions I had in mind were written down as a matter of discussion and were not necessary followed to the

letter. I wanted to make sure that the subjects that interested me were not forgotten during the interview as we only had thirty minutes to cover all subjects.

3.8 Second Phase Questionnaire

The second questionnaire was created to measure 'actual' IB alumni activity in the created network. It fills a hole in the data left by the metric tools available in the social media platforms. The social media platforms could tell me how many people had joined, followed, etc. but could not tell me if they were IB Alumni. This was discovered while looking at the blog metrics. Wordpress lists which countries the visitors are from. There were a significantly high number of visitors from the USA. There are only five IB graduates in total from the USA. Since the number of visitors from the USA to the blog was numbering in the hundreds each month, I had to assume that the majority of those visitors were not IB alumni. The conversation with the Harvard Alumni Association also helped to form the questionnaire. The first questionnaire did not take traditional modes of communication (newsletters, reunions) into serious consideration. I also desired to know how the news had travelled about the IB alumni network. After noticing these shortages in data, the follow-up questionnaire was formed.

A total of 200 survey invitations were sent out. The survey invitation list was created by taking the contacts that answered or were listed as partially answering the first phase survey. The newer graduates, which were not exposed to the first questionnaire, were added to the list for a total of 200. The newer graduate list was prepared by using the ASIO database. All duplicate e-mails were removed from the final invitation list. No e-mail addresses were invalid and all invitations to answer the survey went through without bouncing back.

Digium Enterprise, was used to instigate the survey. This is the same system used for the first-phase questionnaire. The survey was fairly short, only having eight questions. There were five multiple choice questions and three open questions. The number of questions was kept to a minimum in order to prompt as many answers as possible, especially from those that answered the much longer first-phase questionnaire. This questionnaire was conducted over a short period of time due to

deadlines. Out of 200 invitations, 60 responded for a response rate of 30%. The survey was opened on February 25th, 2013. A reminder message was sent out on March 2nd, 2013. The data was collected on March 3rd, 2013. Given the short amount of time, the number of respondents is quite respectable. When the number of replies stagnated, the data was collected and analyzed.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

I had to be careful in choosing my sources of information. The nature of Social media networks and technology means that updates and changes are frequent. Because of this, I did my best to choose written materials that were less than three years old when researching social media networks. The subject of network theory, on the other hand, has remained fairly constant since the mid-sixties. I can be fairly certain of this because in finding sources regarding networks and network theory, similar references were used even in newer academic journal articles. My sources also crossed disciplines while remaining related. This allowed me to triangulate in a matter of speaking.

Some sources may be considered less reliable due to their being blogs and articles but because of the subject, blogs and articles online remain some of the newest and up-to-date material when covering social media tools. My sources are blogs, online articles, academic journals and books. By choosing several types of sources I hoped to be able to choose trustworthy information (Gottschalk 1969, Golder 2000, Howell and Prevenier 2001).

In addition to multiple source types, both quantitative and qualitative research were used. During the early phases of this thesis a single questionnaire was not sufficient to answer the questions posed in this thesis. A second quantitative questionnaire was added during the final phase in order to add validity and to complete the action research cycle. A single interview was also conducted with a member of the Harvard Alumni Association. This single interview was used as a benchmark to see how prevalent universities were approaching the subject of alumni networks. During the interview on October 24th, 2012 we had the chance to discuss the methods that Harvard University uses to keep in touch with its alumni across the globe. The

interview was conducted via Skype. Thirty minutes were allocated for discussion. I attempted to record the conversation. The attempts to record, however, were unsuccessful. I had to write down what we discussed immediately afterwards. Because of the lack of recording, clarity of the discussion and all subjects therein may lose detail. Both the interviewee and interviewer were Americans so little if any of the subject was lost in the telling.

One challenge in researching for this thesis was remaining impartial in the data. Being an IB alumnus myself and working at JAMK, it was difficult, at times, to try to keep a certain amount of distance. Though it may have colored the results of my thesis, my being an IB alumnus also played a positive role. I believe I was able to get the high response rate due to the fact that I knew many of the respondents as well as shared the experience of being an IB student.

4 RESULTS: A SNAPSHOT OF THE ACTION RESEARCH

At the start of this research there were approximately 222 International Business graduates with the first graduates leaving school in 2000. JAMK has attempted to keep track of its alumni over the years with a database. This would require that graduates go to the JAMK web page and sign up to be an alumnus. This approach has met with limited success. Though the database has a collection of contact information of JAMK graduates, the information has not been used nor has there been much progress in developing services for alumni or keeping in touch with them. As of 2012 there is no one at JAMK that is responsible for keeping ties with alumni. Any contact, if any, to JAMK alumni has always been conducted in Finnish. This presents a problem for International Business students as approximately 50% of them are non-Finnish speaking.

First, information was needed on alumni social media habits. Though the framework provided by Forrester Research was an excellent springboard to start this research, it was necessary to find out how often the alumni actually use social media, what types and how often.

After the social media channels were set up, measures were needed to gauge how successful the methods were. Then a follow-up questionnaire was required to

measure how well the current network worked. These last two help to gauge changes that are needed. As in all action research constant measurement and changes are needed throughout the process. Statistics from each of the social media channels have been collected starting from June 23rd, 2011.

4.1 Results of the Wordpress Blog

The Wordpress blog was started in mid-June 2011. The goal was to keep a constant rhythm posting Monday through Friday. Every Friday, a cartoon is posted to lighten the mood for the weekend. Over the following several months the amount of views grew. There was a peak in May 2012. Though the number was impressive at 3300 views that month, the content readers were looking at a Friday cartoon. The readership has remained fairly constant over the last several months with an average of 845 views per month excluding the peak month of May and the starting month of June 2011. The peak in May may have been caused by another blog linking to the Alumni blog. The content readers were interested in that day was a Friday funny. Regardless of that superficial peak in May, readership has grown steadily with readership as of December 2012 at an average of over 1000 views per month.

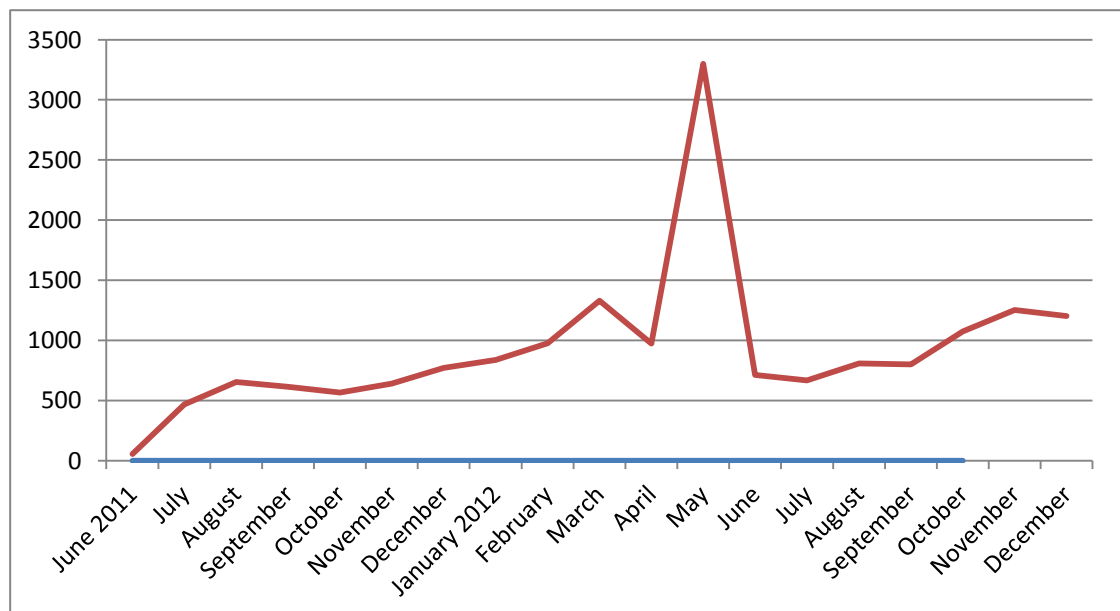


FIGURE 16. Number of views of <http://jamkib.wordpress.com> per month.

The results were a bit of a surprise. It was originally expected that the traffic to the blog would slowly grow and that 50% of the readership would come from Finland

with the rest coming from various countries of mainland Europe. Interestingly enough the majority of readers are from the USA with Finland and the UK in the 2nd and 3rd place respectively. The total list of countries numbers 116.

Country	Views
 United States	3,960
 Finland	907
 United Kingdom	531
 India	518
 Canada	465
 Australia	297
 Philippines	147
 Germany	96
 Netherlands	94
 Malaysia	90
 Russian Federation	84
 South Africa	72

FIGURE 17. Top 12 readerships by country starting February 25th, 2012

The majority of readers are from the USA with Finland and India in the 2nd and 3rd place respectively. The total list of countries numbers 116. A graphical representation of global readership of the blog is available in the appendices. Though readership is growing, the amount of articles shared is small with only five blog entries being shared by readers via Facebook, Twitter, or other social media platforms.

4.2 Results of the LinkedIn International Business Group

Though the number of members has steadily grown month by month there is little to no activity. This is counter to the original expectations. It was originally hoped that alumni would comment, write articles and generally comment on posts. Unfortunately, this has not yet happened. Figure 18, Figure 19, and Figure 20 show the basic statistics of the LinkedIn International Business Alumni group from July 2011 until January 1st, 2013.

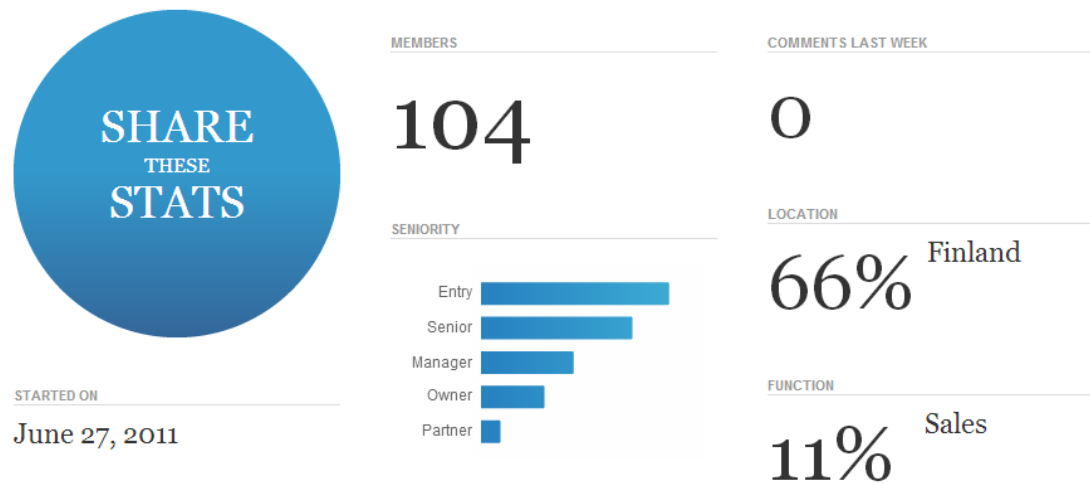


FIGURE 18. Summary of LinkedIn Statistics for International Business Alumni LinkedIn Group (January 1st, 2013).

The results of the LinkedIn group vary greatly from the blog statistics and from the Facebook user count. As shown in Figure 18, the International Business Group in LinkedIn has 104 members as of December 31st, 2012. The vast majority of LinkedIn group members are located in Finland (66%) and 11% of them work in sales.

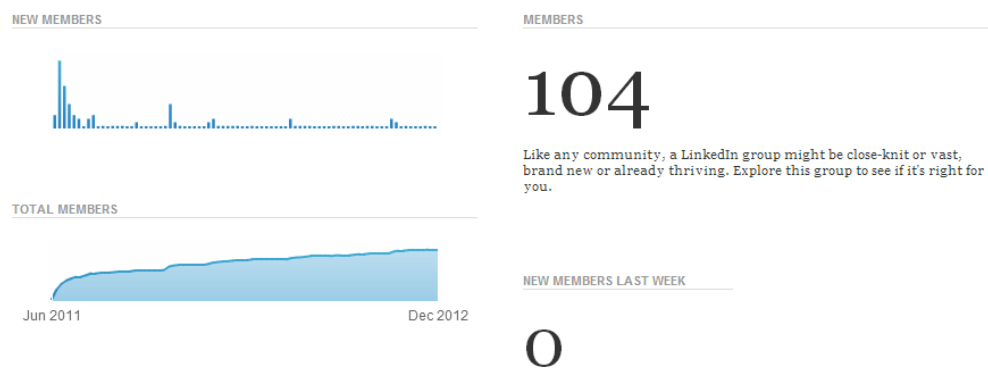


FIGURE 19. Growth of the LinkedIn International Business Group starting June 2011

The graphs in Figure 19 show the number of members that joined the group since the groups' inception in June 2011. There was an initial spike at the start. Since then, the number of members joining has been sporadic. The top graph in Figure 19 shows the number of joiners week to week. The bottom graph in the same figure does show a steady and slow growth.

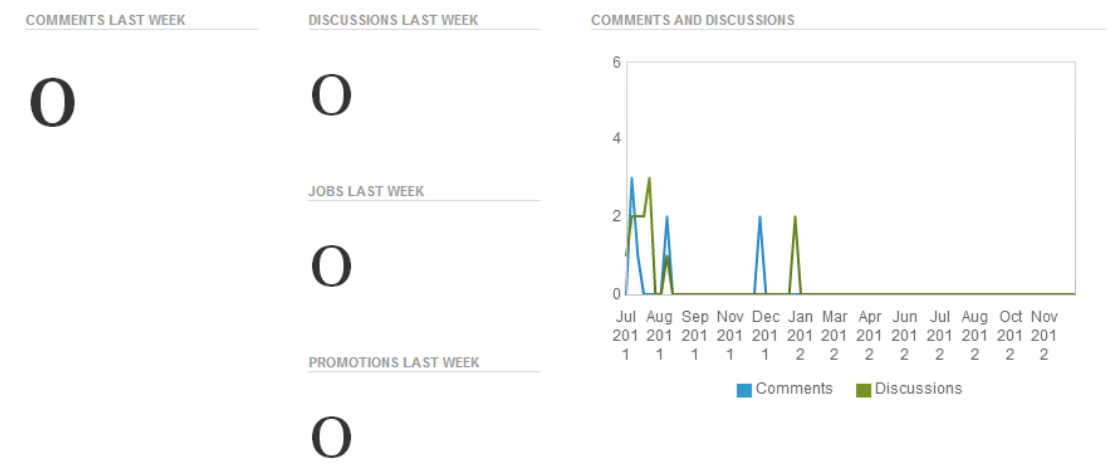


Figure 20. Activity in LinkedIn International Business Group (January 1st, 2013).

The members of this group are extremely passive with only 7 comments and 8 discussions since its inception back in July 2011.

4.3 Results of the Facebook Group

Growth in the Facebook group has been slow. Given that a network, once started, will continue to grow with a little help, there is every indication that this number will continue to grow over time (Barabási 2003). The vast majority of the fans joined the page shortly after its creation. The number has grown very slowly two months after the Facebook page creation at about 1 fan per month. As of December 31st, 2012 there are 67 fans of the page. Activity is nearly non-existent. It appears that the people that have joined the page, are only there to read content and do not make comments.

There is little to no fan participation in the Facebook page though there are indicators that people are being reached. Facebook has metrics called 'Insights' that allow the administrator of the page to see the number of people the page is reaching on a daily basis as well as the number of people talking about the page. One downside to the Facebook page insights is that it does not allow you to see data over more than 89 days at a time limiting the measurement that can be done over a long period of time.

4.4 Results of Twitter

Metric tools in Twitter do not exist as they do in their counterparts (Facebook and LinkedIn). However, we can take into account the number of followers, conversations, replies to tweets, and retweets. There are currently (March 3rd, 2013) only 22 followers in total. Conversations are non-existent and there have been no retweets or replies. Taking these into account, Twitter as a channel for communication was not successful.

4.5 Results of the First Questionnaire

The first phase questionnaire was sent out shortly after the network was created. The questionnaire was meant to gauge the actual needs of the alumni as compared to the framework laid down by Forrester research. Gender was not a factor in the Forrester research framework but it is interesting to note the high number of females in this study. This is most likely due to the high number of female alumni. Out of a total of 270 IB Alumni 127 are female and 88 male. It is difficult to say whether or not the fact that because the author is female made a difference in respondent gender.

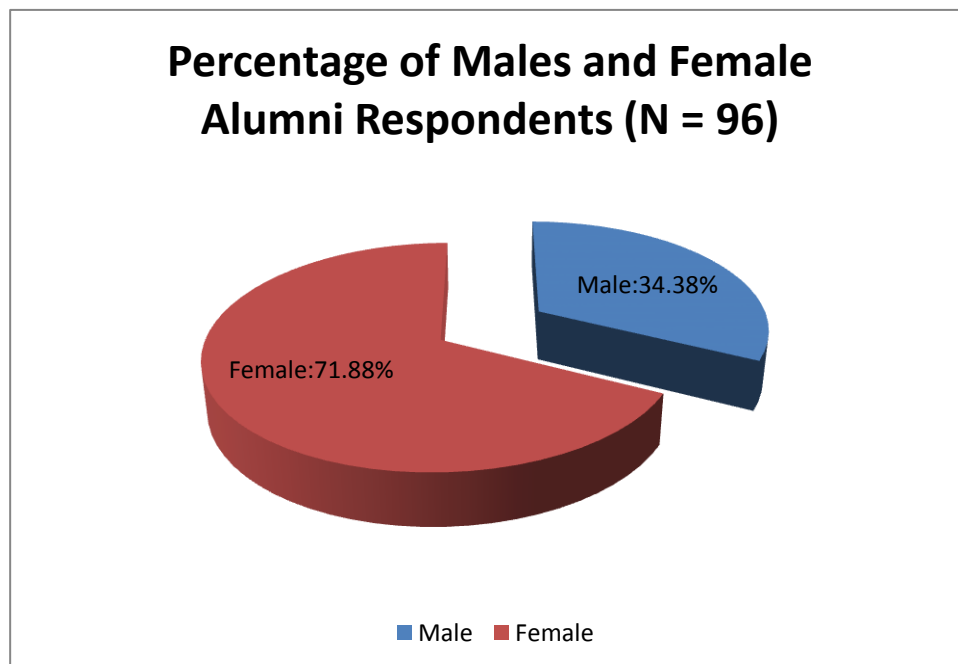


FIGURE 21. Respondent Gender

The number of graduates is fairly even from 2004 through 2011. Because the distribution is fairly even, it can be assumed that the answers received from the respondents are also well balanced

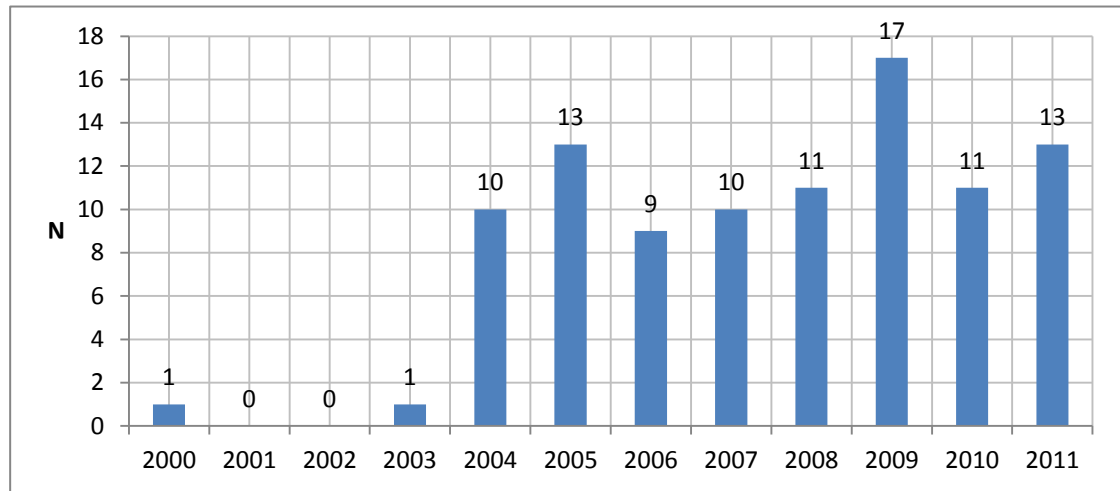


FIGURE 22. Number of graduates by year

Approximately 66% of alumni do not seem to believe that their networks they built while at JAMK serve them today. This may or may not have a bearing on their attitudes toward keeping ties with both other alumni as well as JAMK.

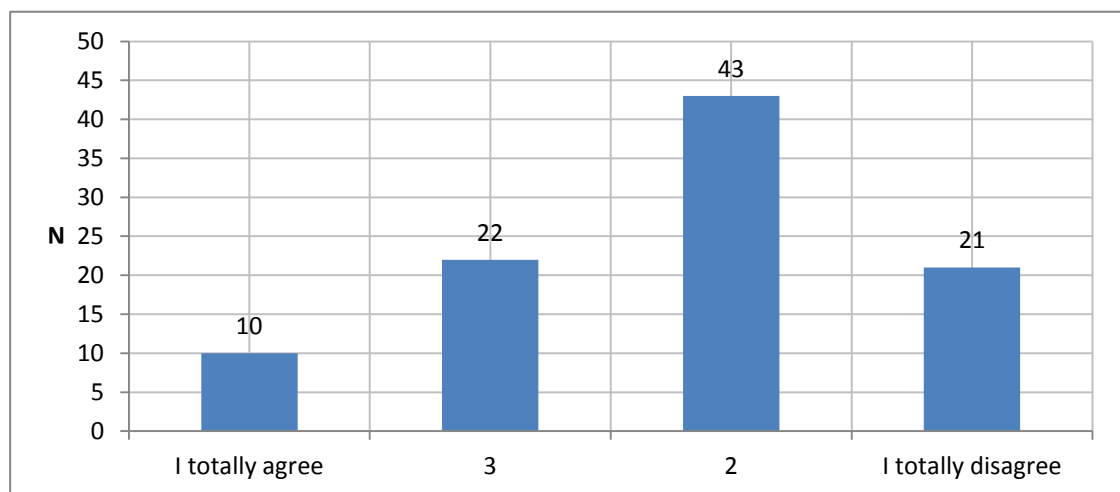


FIGURE 23. The networks built while in IB are still in my use today

The alumni keep in touch with an average of seven other alumni. However, as shown in Figure 25, they use their contacts more for friendship than for professional reasons.

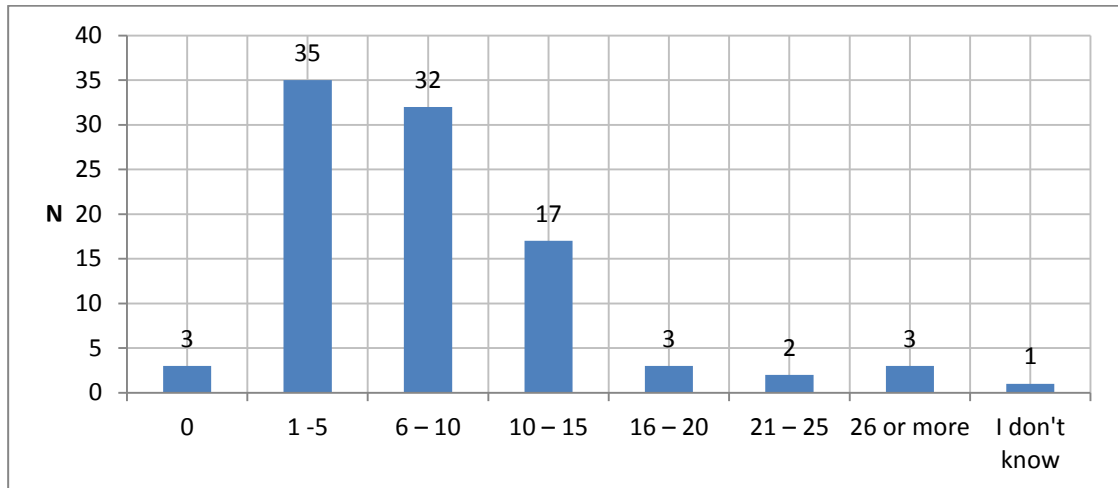


FIGURE 24. How many IB alumni do you currently keep in touch with?

It is interesting that based on Figure 23, Figure 24 and Figure 25, alumni are keeping in touch with other alumni but do not see them as a beneficial network.

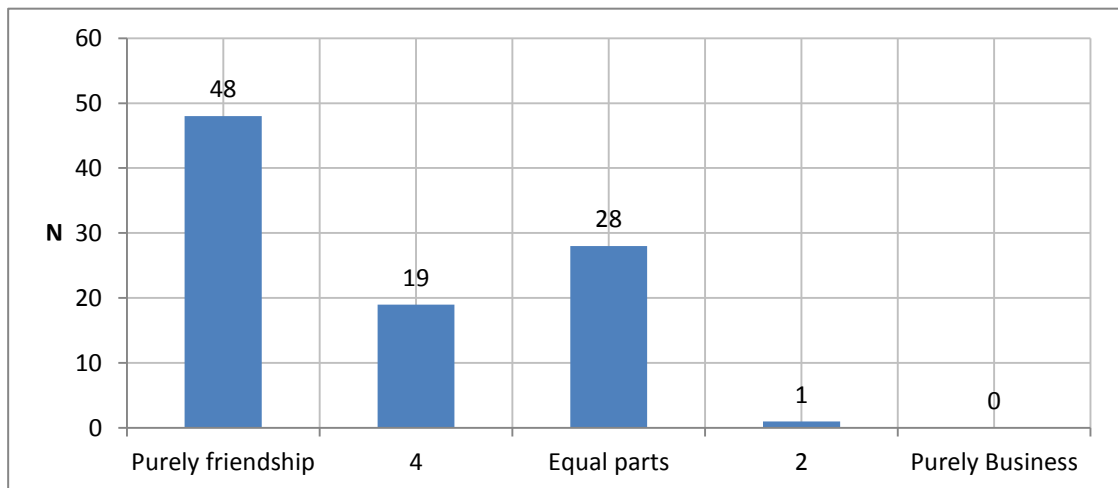


FIGURE 25. What is the purpose for keeping in touch with IB Alumni?

According to the data, it would seem that the framework was incorrect in the assumption that most users would be spectators. As seen in Figure 26 the majority of alumni found Facebook to be the most important social networking tool rather than blogs as the Forrester research framework would suggest.

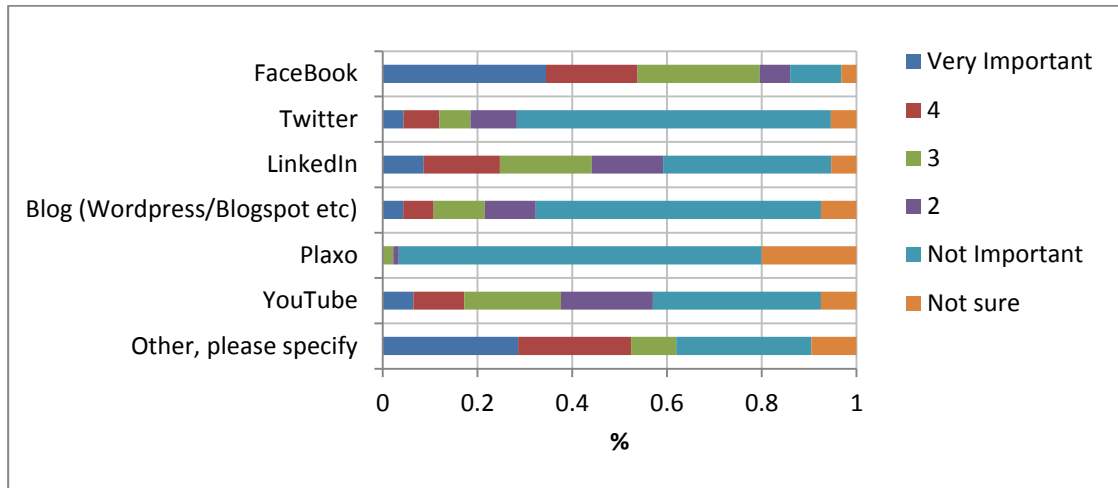


FIGURE 26. How important are the following social media tools?

The data would suggest that IB alumni are more likely to be joiners. Twitter and Plaxo were insignificant in the eyes of the alumni. This data is in agreement with the number of followers and activity found in Twitter. See section 4.4 for more information.

YouTube scored fairly high in terms of importance. YouTube was not taken into account when building the network. This was an unfortunate oversight. Data shows that alumni use Facebook with the greatest frequency with YouTube right behind. LinkedIn is fairly well used with about 45 percent using it at least once or twice a week. Plaxo is not used at all. Some of the “other” social media tools listed by respondents were:

- Vimeo (comparable to YouTube)
- Electronic Trade press and newsletters, Business network engines (Kotka Intelligence Desk, Bumprom, Trade Su, etc.)
- Quora (Knowledge sharing service, questions and answers)
- Skype (Voice over IP)
- Google
- vkontakte.com (Russian Facebook)
- Xing (Social online community resembling a cross between Facebook and LinkedIn)
- Yammer (Private social media service for companies)

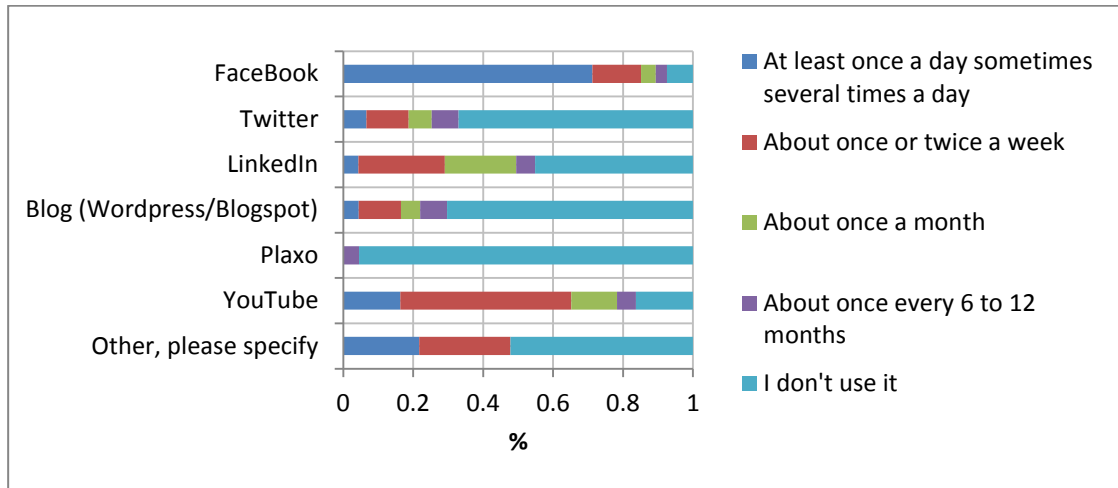


FIGURE 27. How often do you use the following social media tools?

As Facebook and YouTube are the tools that are used the most frequently, perhaps video's generated for alumni such as lectures or other business related videos should be made available.

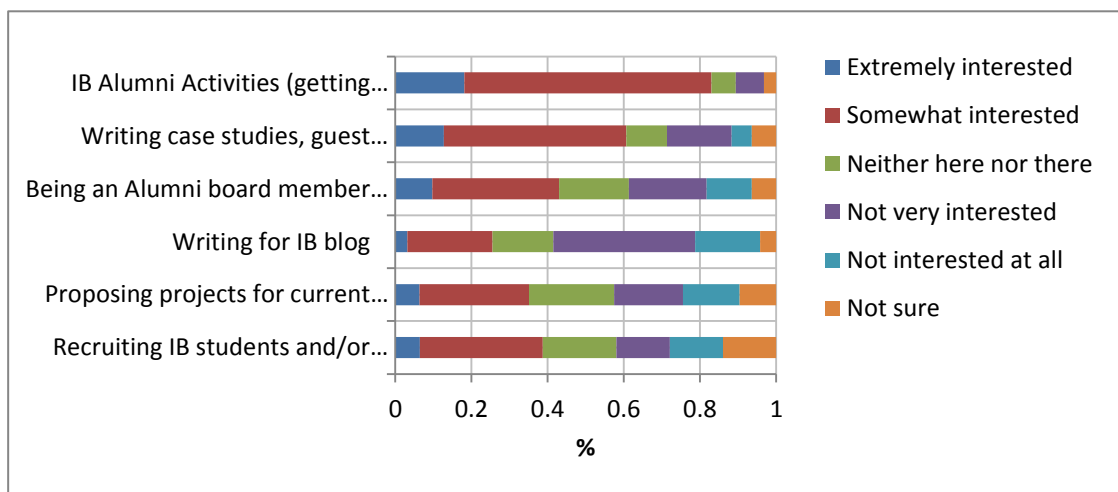


FIGURE 28. Which of the following would you be interested in?

There seems to be a certain amount of interest in all of the subjects listed in Figure 28. Alumni activity, however, tends to disagree with the data collected during the first phase questionnaire. No attempts have been made in having a reunion. Getting alumni interested in writing for the blog and any other contributions have been encouraged but to no avail. This may indicate that the keeper of the network must be more active in encouraging alumni to participate. Over 20% of respondents stated that they would be interested in writing for the blog. Of that 20%, only one

person has actually submitted an article to be posted on the blog since the inception of the network. No projects have come forth nor have IB students been recruited through the network set up for this research. It could be that the data is skewed in that when the alumni answered, they answered optimistically about what they would 'like' to do rather than what they realistically had time to do.

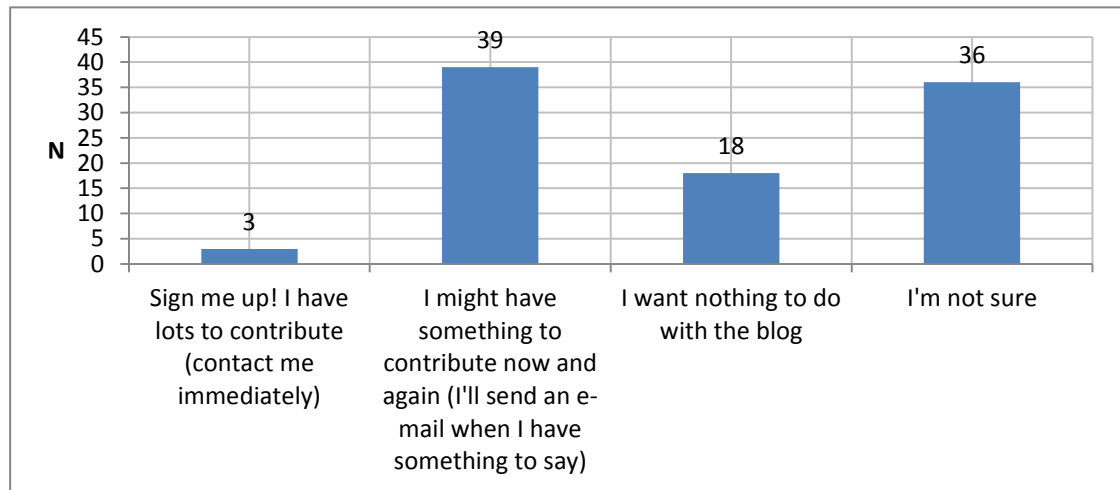


FIGURE 29. Would you be interested in writing in the blog?

The alumni are not particularly interested in contributing to the blog. Thirty-four percent of alumni said that they might have something to contribute. Network data collected since June 2011 show that alumni are not at all active. During the nearly one and a half years, only two alumni have shown any interest. It would seem that the alumni want to be connected with JAMK as shown in Figure 30.

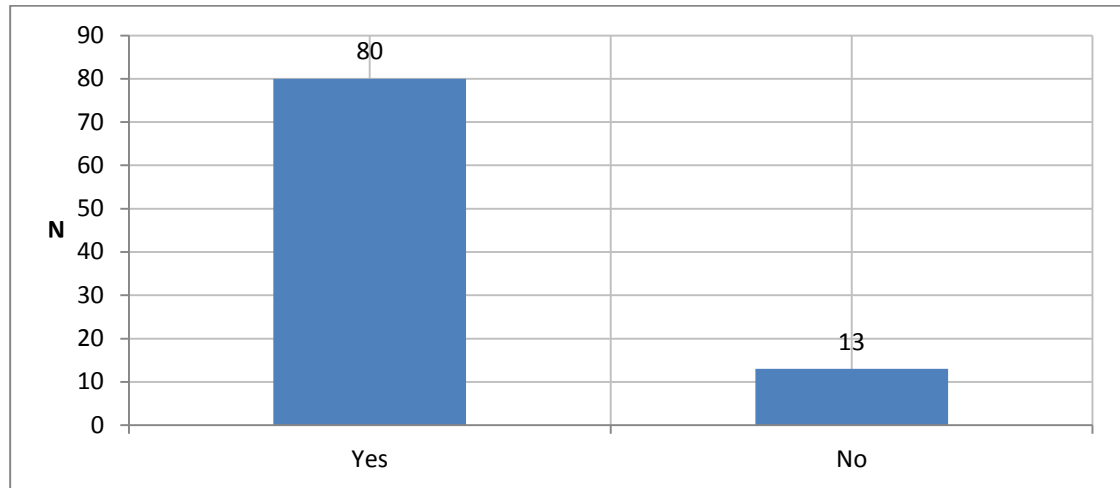


FIGURE 30. May your address be used in the future?

4.6 Results of the Harvard Alumni Association Interview

Kristen DeAmicis holds the position of Deputy Director, University-wide alumni engagement of the Harvard Alumni Association. She had held the position for three months at the time of the interview. The subjects that were used for discussion can be found in the appendices.

The Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) is comprised of both paid employees and volunteers. The HAA itself is much like the head of an organism with legs all over the globe. These 'legs' are independent alumni associations that work very closely with the HAA. The branch offices are usually school focused (school of business, etc.). These branch offices are usually run by volunteers. These volunteers are almost always Harvard alumni. The number of volunteers in all HAA branch offices numbers in the thousands. The number of the HAA itself has around 40 full-time staff members that handle specific jobs. There are also class officers that take care of each graduating class. Alumni also act as mentors for students currently attending Harvard University.

The HAA contacts their alumni using all forms of communication. These include Twitter, Facebook, paper newsletters and their HAA website (<http://alumni.harvard.edu>). They use many different forms of communication due to the wide range in age of their alumni. The HAA receives alumni donations and gifts. They also arrange seminars and trips specifically for their alumni.

Harvard University is directly involved with the HAA. The extent of their involvement is not entirely clear. The conversation hinted at Harvard University paying the salaries of the HAA staff or at least subsidizing the HAA in part. In any case it is clear that Harvard University and the HAA are more than just associated or cooperating on a superficial level.

The conversation was light and jovial. Kristen was very friendly and forthcoming and very happy to help this 'small university in Finland'. It is unfortunate that she only had thirty minutes to spare but I am grateful for the time and information she gave me. It leads me to believe that I might be on the right track as well as gave me some new insights as to how JAMK could be involved.

4.7 Results of the Second Questionnaire

The second questionnaire was used to measure actual IB alumni activity. It fills a lapse in the data left by the metric tools available in the social media platforms. The social media platforms could tell me how many people had joined, followed etc. but could not tell me if they were IB Alumni. Out of 200 invitations sent, 81 replied. There was a fairly even distribution of respondents from each graduation year. The graduating year of 2013 is naturally smaller due to the fact that this questionnaire was sent out in the beginning of 2013. The percentage of respondents by graduation can be seen in Figure 31. If the year is not listed in the figure below, it indicates that no answers were received from alumni graduating during that particular year.

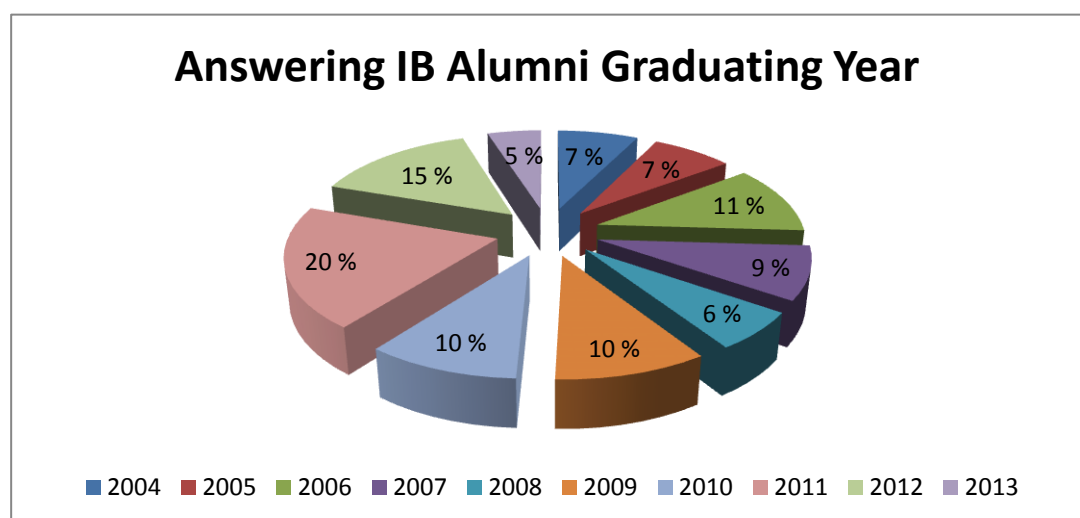






FIGURE 31. What year did you graduate?

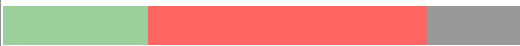


The most popular channel was the Facebook Page. That being said only 15 out of 81 respondents (18,5%) visited the Facebook JAMK IB Alumni page once a month or more frequently. Twitter was the least popular with only 5 out of 81 respondents (6%) visited Twitter at all. This was expected as the data matches both in the first phase questionnaire and the second phase questionnaire.

TABLE 2. How often do you visit each of the following?

	How Often Do you Visit/Check?						Total
	Daily (Value: 5)	Once a Week (Value: 4)	Once a Month (Value: 3)	Once every 6 months or so (Value: 2)	Never (Value: 1)	Don't Know (Value: 0)	
JAMK IB Blog (avg: 1,55)							100 %
LinkedIn International Business Group (avg: 1,38)							100 %
FaceBook Page (JAMK IB Alumni) (avg: 1,71)							100 %
Twitter Feed (avg: 1,12)							100 %
Total	1 %	2 %	9 %	14 %	68 %	7 %	

The IB alumni were also asked if they had 'Liked' the Facebook page, become a blog subscriber or become a twitter follower. 27% of respondents 'Liked' the Facebook page. Because the number of respondents that visited the Facebook page once a month or more often was 18,5%, this would lead one to believe that they 'Like' it because they want to take part (joiner) but not participate. The percentage of blog subscribers was 2,4%. The amount of twitter followers was only 1,2% (1 out of 81).

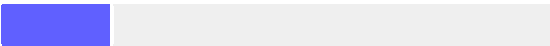
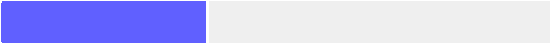


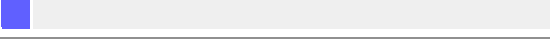

TABLE 3. Which of the following things have you done?

	Yes (Value: 1)	No (Value: 2)	I don't know (Value: 0)	Total
I have 'Liked' the JAMK IB Alumni Facebook Page (avg: 1,66)				100 %
Become a blog subscriber (avg: 1,97)				100 %
Become a twitter follower (avg: 1,99)				100 %
Total	10 %	77 %	12 %	

The following table shows how the respondents heard about the network.

Approximately 20% claim that they never heard of this network. Interestingly enough, nearly half of those that answered that they have never heard of the network answered that they visited the Facebook page, twitter or blog on a regular basis. This would lead me to believe that something in the questioning was misleading and misunderstood. Nearly 5% answered “Other” stating that they received info through a staff member at JAMK, actively searched for the information and found it, or received an e-mail from another alumnus.

TABLE 4. Where did you hear about the IB alumni network?

	Answer	Count	Percent	20%
1.	I've never heard of it. This is the first time.	16	19,75%	
2.	Through the first questionnaire	30	37,04%	
3.	From Alison Directly	19	23,46%	
4.	From a friend	6	7,41%	
5.	I accidentally found it	6	7,41%	
6.	Other, how?	4	4,94%	
	Total	81	100%	

According to the data, most respondents were most interested in Annual reunions. E-mail newsletters and keeping the Facebook page alive followed in popularity. The

Twitter account showed the least favor. Respondents that answered in “Other” stated that they would like reunions once every four or five years.

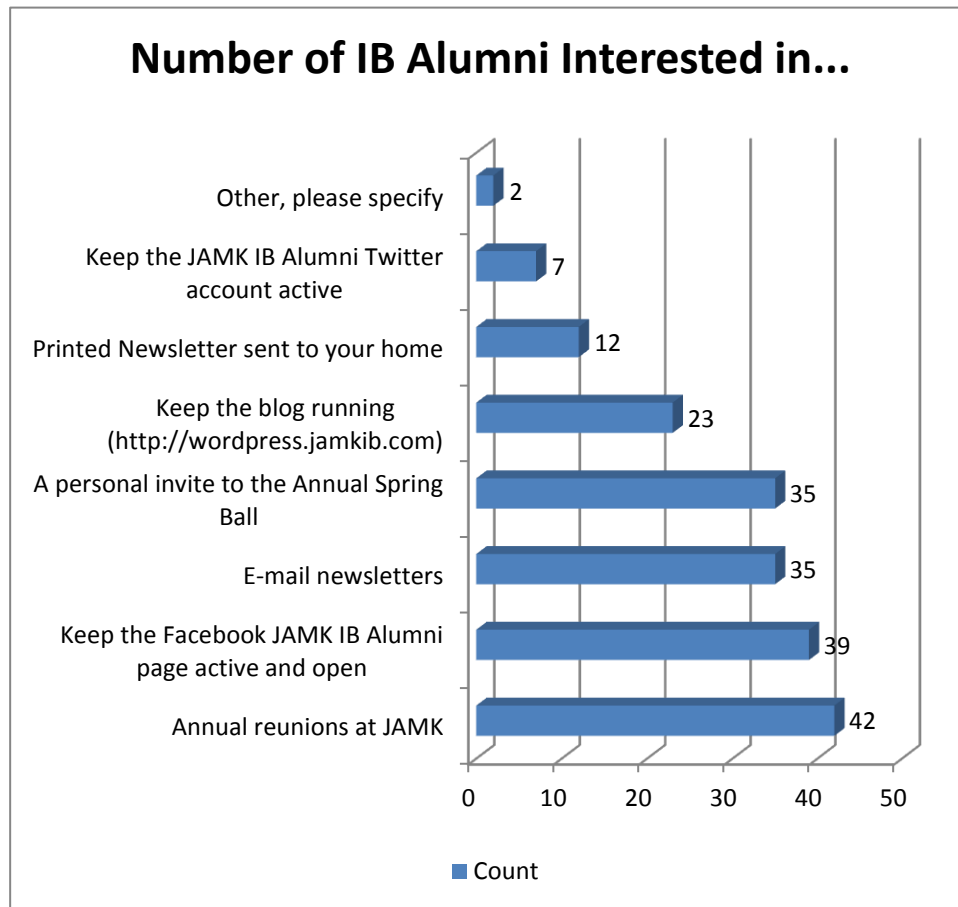


FIGURE 32. Which of the following would you really like to see happen? Choose all that apply.

Open feedback questions were:

- Comments about content. Both positive and negative (constructive please) feedback is welcome.
- Are there any other social media platforms you think we ought to use? Maybe there's something we already use that you think is useless. List any ideas below and why you'd think they'd be good.
- I'd love to hear your input. How can we do things better? How can we make things more interesting? What are we doing wrong? Your input matters!

Some of the more prominent comments from these open feedback questions were:

Regarding Content

- I don't have profile in Facebook and don't use in general this channel of social media
- The Facebook page is the easiest one to follow. The LinkedIn group kind of disappears in the flow of other feeds...
- Biggest issue with these platforms is the fact that there is no real communication. It is more about pushing info from JAMK to the alumni in the form of linked news. No interaction
- I think blog was good, but I haven't checked that for a long time. Also I haven't been much in FB or Twitter or haven't noticed LinkedIn group.
- Content is good. No comments there. Perhaps you could add a few stories here and there about methodologies (and new theories) about more recent stuff out on the business markets.

Regarding other media platforms

- I don't think more than Facebook and Twitter, you should have more due to confusion of alumni that might occur, especially in concern with the spams and junk mails...
- Google+ as you can do Hangouts, which would be a cool way for a class reunion.
- I think you're already there where people are, but I don't know what would be the best channel to reach them.
- I think they are all good platforms; perhaps they just need more promotion.

Regarding how we could do things better and more interesting.

- By having exchanged students post the matters on the web, writing about personal experiences aboard, what IB has given to you. All of these are interesting to hear.
- ... Shall we first do some events through the internet? First of all, alumni need to know each other. Please find a way to encourage alumni to introduce, update about their career or so....

- ... one should not post too often as well. I'd rather read something "real" than irrelevant stuff posted constantly.
- Theme Alumni meetings at JAMK - Professional seminars - Network meetings with companies representatives - Online courses for Alumni (could be for extra charges)
- ...it hasn't been marketed or advertised enough since I hardly know about this thing even though I'm very active user of Facebook and email and I check all the information carefully that has been sent to me
- I would like to hear that how alumni can help current students and recent graduates to find work.
- Mailchimp would be a good tool to send Newsletters, these feel more personal and if sent quarterly wouldn't intrude too much.
- You're doing great ;) It just kills me that I don't have more time and energy to contribute. I hope other people have more of that.

A full list of the open responses can be found in the appendices.

5 DISCUSSION

Back in June 2011, a plan was drawn up to create a network to help tie the IB alumni together. After blogging, writing and tweeting for nearly a year and a half, the results are nothing short of unexpected. I went into this thinking that the network would have a steady but small following of active alumni. The IB as students were always active socially while at university and remain tied in Facebook and in other channels. They even meet up on occasion. I am speaking from personal experience as I am one of those alumni.

I believe this research is important for JAMK and indeed for all Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences across Finland. The challenge of engaging alumni spans the entire country of Finland. I hope this thesis, while it is not a medicine for all, would help other universities take that vitally important step to change.

5.1 Answering the Research Questions

It is here at the end that we discover whether or not we achieved our goals and answered the research questions. The main and sub-research questions to be answered at the very beginning of this endeavor were:

- How can a university keep their alumni engaged despite their distance?
 - How can engagement be understood in terms of alumni?
 - Which are the proper channels for alumni network communication?
 - How many channels are adequate for alumni communication?
 - How can these channels be maintained over time?

I feel that the research questions were answered but not with the certainty that I would have liked. I was able to create a conduit for communication that keeps the alumni coming back but the alumni are not as active and involved as hoped. The proper channels were chosen but they need improvement. The number of channels is fairly clear but again may change as the network evolves. Perhaps this is a consequence of action research. The matter of maintaining channels has not been answered. The proposed idea of alumni activity keeping the network alive has, as of yet, not proven an effective means of longevity.

Keeping the alumni engaged has been a challenge. The alumni have not been active. They have not contributed even with prompting. I realize that time is precious and perhaps they do not have the time to spare. I believed that because of the number of creators (19%) and critics (26%) that there would be more comments and input from alumni. If looking at the nature of my audience, I would go so far as to say that the majority are joiners rather than spectators.

As much as I tried to avoid it, I did go into this project with my preconceived notions about what the network should consist of and what results I would achieve. These preconceived notions may have colored the questions in the questionnaire and quite possibly the choice of channels to some extent. Despite that fact, I still stand by my choices based on the framework laid down by Forrester Research. The framework, however, is faulty and does not apply to the audience I have been trying to reach.

Several things have become clear however. Not all the channels initially chosen are suitable for the purpose of engaging IB alumni. IB Alumni do not fit the profile as laid

down by Forrester Research. There are also more viable options available than was originally expected. The idea of electronic newsletters came up in the research and really should be investigated. Because of this research, I now know which channels need to be augmented and which ones should be dropped altogether.

The blog has been a pleasant and unexpected surprise though quite labor intensive. The blog has a very wide and international audience. This looks good for JAMK as a brand. Interestingly enough the majority of blog visitors are not JAMK alumni making it more of a platform to speak about JAMK as a brand rather than a channel for communication with alumni.

The question still remains of how to keep the IB Alumni engaged. I believe that this research has answered this question superficially but the perfect method of engagement has not yet been found. By superficially, I mean that the IB alumni are being reached. I cannot expect 100% of the alumni to visit the platforms. This kind of expectation would be unrealistic. This research has allowed the setup of a network that reaches the appropriate audiences despite the Forrester Research framework not fitting the IB alumni profile as well as expected. When it comes to actual engagement, interaction and initiative, the conversation has been almost entirely one sided. Getting the IB Alumni to write, connect, converse and participate still needs work. I cannot say whether or not this will improve over time or if new methods are needed. Because the IB alumni do not interact, this also makes answering the last research question difficult. How can we upkeep these channels over time? Originally, the idea was that IB Alumni would participate and initiate conversation and action. This would allow the effortless continuation and the alumni network. All it would require would be two or three active individuals to keep things moving. So far there is only one active party. According to the comments in the questionnaires, I am seen more as an active participant of JAMK rather than one of the Alumni. Another option would be to get JAMK involved though this cannot be guaranteed. Funding changes and restrictions may not allow the hiring of new staff to take charge of alumni activities. The job of handling an alumni network, keeping it interesting and up to date requires more hands and outlets than what is currently available.

5.2 Improvements to the Research and Shortcomings

This research could have gone deeper. It is difficult to know how deep one should go. This research became very involved and multifaceted. I believe that there would be more to learn and more avenues to discover given more time. I believe that this research would have been helped by a few in-depth interviews with alumni but it is difficult to make a “one size fits all” solution when talking about so many different cultures and age ranges.

The interview with the HAA was very interesting but a few more interviews with universities closer in similarity to JAMK would have been helpful. Though Harvard is a very successful university and certainly one worth benchmarking, it is difficult to compare JAMK and Harvard regarding size, age and reputation.

Regarding my own participation, I have acted, not only as the author of this thesis, but as an IB alumni and a JAMK employee inside the International Business Degree Programme. This has given me a very unique perspective and allowed me to see the situation from many angles. It may have also colored my perspective and questions in the thesis. One cannot discount the possibility that respondents may have also made their answers more positive if they knew me on a personal level.

More thought should have also gone into the role that JAMK should play in alumni activities as well as its practical aspects. This would have made it must easier for JAMK to implement and would have been far more beneficial for JAMK on the whole. The nature of action research is also a handicap. It is cyclical in nature and is never truly completed.

5.3 Recommendations from the Research

If JAMK truly wants to keep in touch with its alumni, it must take measures and cease seeing the alumni as an overhead cost. Rather, JAMK should see the alumni as an asset both in knowledge and fiscally. Not only can the alumni bring knowledge in the form of current information from the working world but as projects and guest lecturer. The alumni can also be a form of income including new projects that might bring revenue to JAMK as well as donations.

The alumni network might truly take off once the heavy groundwork is done and some cooperation between the alumni and JAMK can be generated.

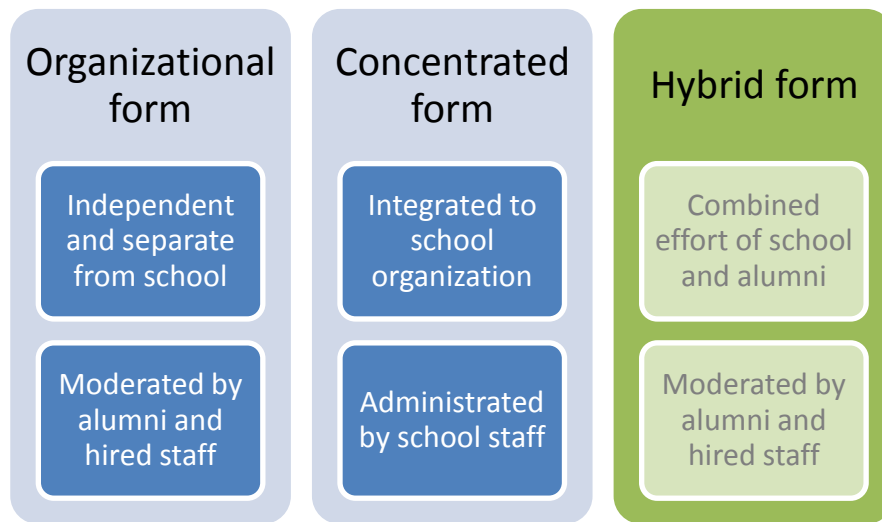


FIGURE 33. Forms of alumni networks modified from the original by (Aarva and Alijärvi 2012). Hybrid form in green added by Doolittle-Suokas

Aarva and Alijärvi created a model showing the two types of organizational forms for alumni networks (see Figure 6 on page 16) for the original. The original parts of the Aarva and Alijärvi model are shown in blue in Figure 33. The first type is the organizational form. This type is not associated with the university. It runs independently and is moderated by alumni and their own hired staff. The second type is the concentrated form. This type is integrated into the university. It is often part of the marketing departments work. This type of form is administered by university staff only. I would add a third type called a hybrid form. This type of alumni organization is a combined effort of both the university and alumni. The two work closely together. The university is financially involved but not solely responsible for alumni activities. This type of organization is moderated by both alumni and hired staff. This is a very simplified view of how the Harvard Alumni Association coordinates their alumni efforts.

The Twitter account should be closed. There would be no harm in keeping it open though according to results of all data, the twitter channel remains largely unused. The blog is not as important as once thought. It may be worth rethinking the frequency of blog posts. Rather than posting five times a week, it could be cut down to once a week finding content more relevant to the alumni. A concerted effort

should be made to push the IB alumni to contribute. More encouragement should be given to coax more interaction from the alumni.

Facebook should be used more aggressively. It now acts as a portal to the blog and to posted articles. Alumni are quiet and non-reactive. The same behavior has been observed in JAMKs Alumni pages as well. It would seem that quite behavior is not only relegated to the IB Alumni. The Facebook page should serve to stimulate conversation in a safe environment as well as allow alumni to converse with each other.

Signs in the data point to the need for more active marketing of the network as well as expansion of communication channels. This may include electronic newsletters. This may also offer a solution to JAMK's ailing alumni database.

Electronic Newsletters

I have opened a Mailchimp (<http://www.mailchimp.com>) account which would not only allow the sending of electronic newsletters with minimal effort but also allow alumni to subscribe and update their contact information. This service is free and internet browser based. Some appealing aspects of the server are:

- Easy to use
- Multiple users allowed and fully controllable. This would allow students, alumni and staff to access the service and contribute. This may partially solve the continuity problem.
- Full control of how the newsletter looks. It can be completely customized to take on the JAMK brand look and feel easily.
- The service is free for up to 12 000 newsletters per month provided that the number of subscribers is less than 2 000. After these limits are met it is possible to start a paid plan. The free plan is more than enough for IB alumni needs. If JAMK were to take this into use, a paid account might be needed.
- Making newsletters is a WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get) process

Newsletters would be sent out four times a year for example. Articles/news written would be investigated carefully and offer subjects that are of interest to the IB Alumni. These articles could be written by IB students. This would provide writing

and research experience for them. I aim to test this and continue development into the future.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

I would hope for this research to continue. One and a half years is simply too short a time to complete such a complex undertaking. Social interaction among IB alumni is more complex than first thought. A deeper look into how the IB alumni truly relate and interact would be worth researching. The aspects of different cultures, ages and genders would make for fascinating examination.

It would also be interesting to study how important events, such as graduation commencement for instance, might tie alumni more tightly together and to their university. How important is it that alumni are bound as a graduating or starting class (class of 2013, etc.) and what effect does that have on alumni behavior. These questions came to light due to the interview with Harvard's Alumni Association and observations of the US University alumni.

More attention should also be paid to JAMK's role, if any, in alumni activities and communications. A practical look into a plan of action for the University itself would be valuable. The development of new channels and methods of communication should also move forward.

5.5 Closing

I went into this thinking that this would be a fairly cut and dried thesis to research and write but nothing could be further from the truth. What I found was something much more profound and complicated than I could ever imagine! A network is all about people and there is nothing simple about people and the connections they keep. This research has remained interesting for throughout the process. I could compare this research to something my grandmother said to me many years ago. "I must not stop walking no matter how painful. If I do, I will never walk again." No matter how painful the process of building a truly engaging alumni network may be, it is worth doing. I hope this process will continue to evolve long after I am no longer part of its fabric, leaving a lasting legacy that will benefit JAMK, its alumni as well as

other institutes of higher learning for years to come. Lastly, I would like to express my profound gratitude to all of the IB Alumni that participated in this study. Without them, none of this would have been possible. *Thank you.*

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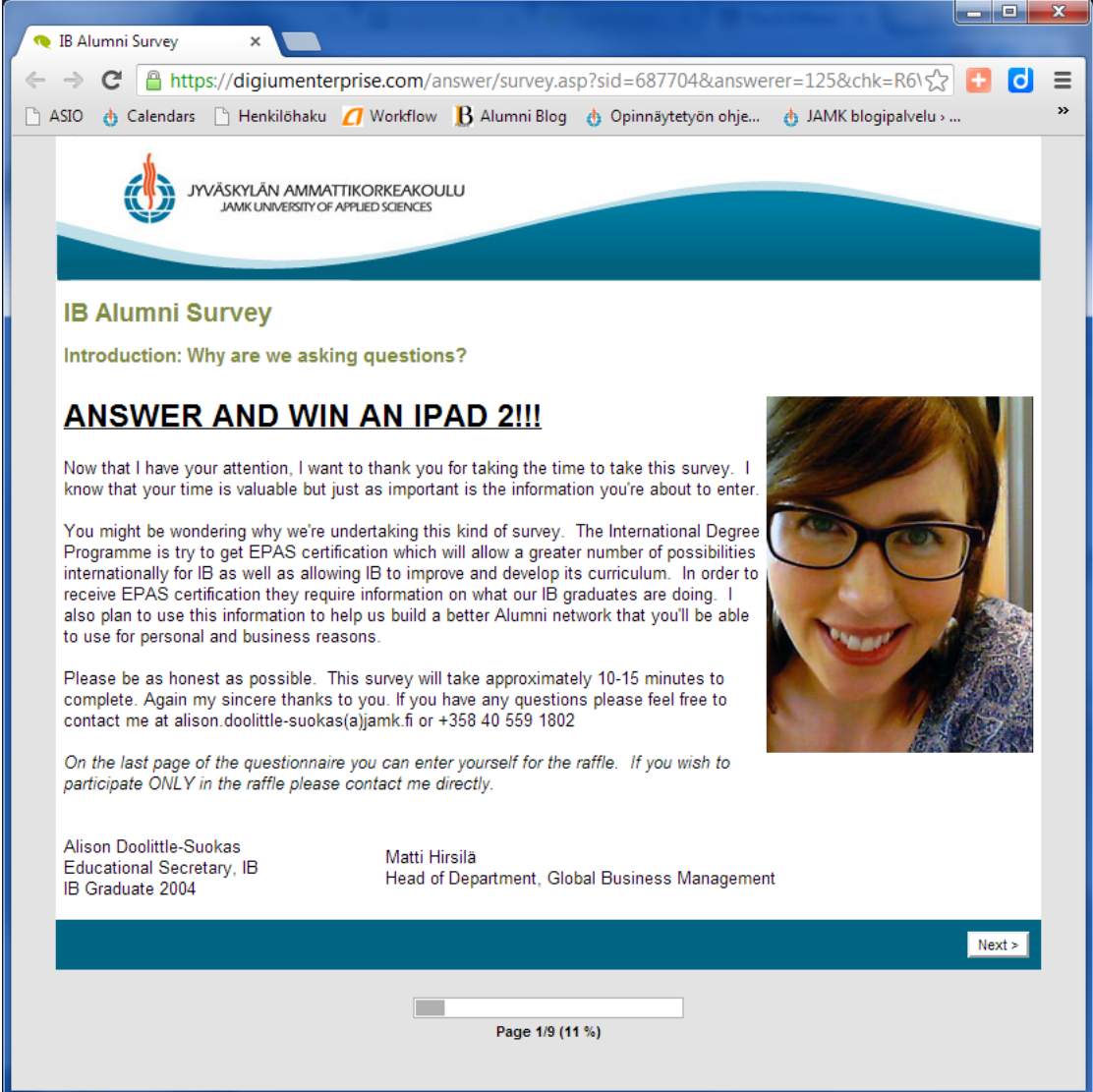
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APPENDICES


APPENDIX 1 – Questionnaire Phase 1



IB Alumni Survey

<https://digiumenterprise.com/answer/survey.asp?sid=687704&answerer=125&chk=R6>

ASIO Calendars Henkilöhakuri Workflow Alumni Blog Opinnäytetyön ohje... JAMK blogipalvelu > ...

 JYVÄSKYLÄN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
JAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

IB Alumni Survey

Introduction: Why are we asking questions?

ANSWER AND WIN AN IPAD 2!!!

Now that I have your attention, I want to thank you for taking the time to take this survey. I know that your time is valuable but just as important is the information you're about to enter.

You might be wondering why we're undertaking this kind of survey. The International Degree Programme is trying to get EPAS certification which will allow a greater number of possibilities internationally for IB as well as allowing IB to improve and develop its curriculum. In order to receive EPAS certification they require information on what our IB graduates are doing. I also plan to use this information to help us build a better Alumni network that you'll be able to use for personal and business reasons.

Please be as honest as possible. This survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Again my sincere thanks to you. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at [alison.doolittle-suokas\(a\)jamk.fi](mailto:alison.doolittle-suokas(a)jamk.fi) or +358 40 559 1802

On the last page of the questionnaire you can enter yourself for the raffle. If you wish to participate ONLY in the raffle please contact me directly.

Alison Doolittle-Suokas
Educational Secretary, IB
IB Graduate 2004

Matti Hirsilä
Head of Department, Global Business Management

[Next >](#)

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What is your date of birth? _____

Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What year did you graduate?

- ☐ 2000
- ☐ 2001
- ☐ 2002
- ☐ 2003
- ☐ 2004
- ☐ 2005
- ☐ 2006
- ☐ 2007
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2009
- ☐ 2010
- ☐ 2011

What is your current nationality? (*you may select more than one if you have dual-nationality*)

<-Extensive list of countries omitted from the appendix due to excessive length->

What is your current country of residence?

<-Extensive list of countries omitted from the appendix due to excessive length->

The highest degree I hold at the moment is:

- ☐ BBA
- ☐ Masters/MBA
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

I am currently studying:

- ☐ at the bachelor's level (BBA, etc)
- ☐ at the master's level (MBA or eMBA included)
- ☐ at PhD level
- ☐ I'm not currently studying
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

I am currently:

- ☐ working full-time
- ☐ working part-time
- ☐ unemployed
- ☐ on sabbatical
- ☐ a stay at home parent
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

I currently work in:

- ☐ the public sector (city, regional, ministry)
- ☐ an educational institution (school, vocational education, higher education...)
- ☐ a business organisation
- ☐ my own enterprise as an entrepreneur (Full/Partial Owner)
- ☐ a nonprofit organization
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

My organizational position is:

- ☐ a director
- ☐ a manager (team, line, unit)
- ☐ project manager
- ☐ a specialist
- ☐ an assistant
- ☐ a lecturer
- ☐ a researcher
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

What's your official title? _____

My present duties are related to:

- ☐ sales
- ☐ procurement / purchases
- ☐ logistics
- ☐ customer service
- ☐ marketing / marketing communication
- ☐ planning
- ☐ product/service development
- ☐ manufacturing
- ☐ human resources
- ☐ financial management/administration
- ☐ general management/administration
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

The kind of employment contract I have is:

- ☐ Temporary (ends on a specific date)
- ☐ Permanent (choose this option if you're an entrepreneur)
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

The company/organization I currently work for has about how many employees total?

- ☐ 1 - 9
- ☐ 10 - 249
- ☐ 250 - 500
- ☐ more than 500
- ☐ Don't know

Please enter the company name: _____

My current salary before taxes per month is (*Choose the closest figure*):

<-Salary listed between 0-8000 € /month, More than 8000€ per month, I prefer not to say->

When you started your first full-time job after graduation what was the entry level monthly salary before taxes?

<-Salary listed between 0-8000 € /month, More than 8000€ per month, I prefer not to say->

My professional career started (*first employment found including own business*)

- ☐ before graduation and while in IB
- ☐ about 3 months after graduation
- ☐ about 6 months after graduation
- ☐ about 9 months after graduation
- ☐ about 12 months after graduation
- ☐ more than 12 months after graduation
- ☐ have not been able to find employment yet
- ☐ I have not been actively looking for work as I've continued my education
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

How many times have you changed jobs after graduation? For example: If you're still in your first job after graduation you would choose 0.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ I don't know

The competences I gained at IB has sufficiently helped me in my career and duties.

I totally agree	3	2	I totally disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During my studies in IB I was able to connect with organisations that have been useful to me in my career

I totally agree	3	2	I totally disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The networks I built while studying at IB still serve me today in my line of work.

I totally agree	3	2	I totally disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

About how many IB graduates and/or IB exchange students do you keep in touch with on a personal and/or professional level? This could also mean someone you contact once every 6 months or more frequently.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1 -5
- ☐ 6 – 10
- ☐ 10 – 15
- ☐ 16 – 20
- ☐ 21 – 25
- ☐ 26 or more
- ☐ I don't know

What are you reasons for being in touch with other IB Alumni?

Purely friendship	4	Equal parts	2	Purely Business
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How important are the following tools to you both professionally and personally?

5 = Very important 1=Not important

	Very Important	4	3	2	Not Important	Not sure
FaceBook	()	()	()	()	()	()
Twitter	()	()	()	()	()	()
LinkedIn	()	()	()	()	()	()
Blog (Wordpress/Blogspot etc)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Plaxo	()	()	()	()	()	()
YouTube	()	()	()	()	()	()
Other, please specify	()	()	()	()	()	()

How often do you use the following social media?

	At least once a day sometimes several times a day	About once or twice a week	About once a month	About once every 6 to 12 months	I don't use it
FaceBook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog (Wordpress/Blogspot)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plaxo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
YouTube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please specify	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

State your interest in the following things:

Answering these questions does not obligate you in any way.

	Extremely interested	Somewhat interested	Neither here nor there	Not very interested	Not interested at all	Not sure
IB Alumni Activities (getting together)	()	()	()	()	()	()
Writing case studies, guest lecturing etc.	()	()	()	()	()	()
Being an Alumni board member if an Alumni association is created	()	()	()	()	()	()
Writing for IB blog	()	()	()	()	()	()
Proposing projects for current IB students	()	()	()	()	()	()
Recruiting IB students and/or graduates	()	()	()	()	()	()

Would you give us some feedback on IB?

In your opinion what are the key competences and skills a business graduate should have for the future?

Name 3 reasons you would recommend someone to become an IB student at JAMK.

Reason 1 _____

Reason 2 _____

Reason 3 _____

I'm proud to be a JAMK IB graduate and I tell people openly.

I'm		I'm		I don't
proud to		somewhere		want to
tell	4	in the	2	tell
people		middle		anyone
()	()	()	()	()

A new blog for IB Alumni has been started at <http://jamkib.wordpress.com>. Would you be interested in being one of many authors?

- ☐ Sign me up! I have lots to contribute (contact me immediately)
- ☐ I might have something to contribute now and again (I'll send an e-mail when I have something to say)
- ☐ I want nothing to do with the blog
- ☐ I'm not sure

As a valued IB Alumni are there any services you'd like to have? (examples: free webinars, free training, books at discount, JAMK merchandise, etc)

I'd like to send you a little gift to thank you for filling this out and give you the **chance to win an iPad 2**. If you'd be so kind as to enter your current mailing address I'll send you a little something to sweeten your day and enter you into the raffle for the iPad 2. Of course this information will NEVER be given to a 3rd party.

Please fill in your Name and Address as it should appear on the envelope.

May I use this address to update JAMK's database?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

When I update your information in ASIO (JAMK's database) I can also adjust what kind of marketing you get (if any). If you leave this blank your ASIO rights will be left as they are.

**You may also request to have these rights changed at any time by contacting me!
 alison.doolittle-suokas@jamk.fi**

	No	Yes
My information can be used for research purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My information can be used in marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My information can given to prospective employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 2 – Harvard Alumni Association Questions

Interviewed: Kristen DeAmicis Deputy Director

October 24th, 2012. Time: 30 min

1. University-wide alumni engagement?
2. How long have you been doing it?
3. How many people are running the HAA? Volunteers? Staff?
4. How do you keep in touch with alumni especially those that are abroad?
5. How do you keep track of them all? Do they update their own info or do you track them down?
6. I've noticed that there are quite a few Harvard groups and pages in Facebook. Are any of those official? To what extent do you use social media if at all?
7. There seem to be a lot of interesting events listed in your web site. I wasn't able to see any information on the happenings without a login.
8. HAA Travels look really amazing. Are these trips meant to help fund the HAAA as well or just a really nice benefit for alumni? Does the HAA arrange the trips?
9. I see that each School has its own alumni group (Business School, Divinity School, Law, etc). How does that work?
10. When it comes to keeping alumni involved, what do you find works best for you?
11. What doesn't work at all?

APPENDIX 3 – Questionnaire Phase Two

IB Alumni Followup

It feels like ages ago that I sent out the first questionnaire about the fabooshness of being an IB Alumni. It is in part thanks to you, that we got EPAS accreditation! This is the second wave of questions (and the last) that I'll be sending "scouts honor"! Some of you have been in it from the start. Others (newer graduates) are just now being included.

I'm wrapping up my thesis now and want to check a couple of things. Wordpress and Facebook can give me some statistics but I want to hear your opinion. There comes a point where I've got to make changes and improvements in the exsiting framework. I can only do that properly with your help. This is a really short questionnaire and should take you less than 5 minutes.

What year did you graduate?

- ☐ 1998
- ☐ 1999
- ☐ 2000
- ☐ 2001
- ☐ 2002
- ☐ 2003
- ☐ 2004
- ☐ 2005
- ☐ 2006
- ☐ 2007
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2009
- ☐ 2010
- ☐ 2011
- ☐ 2012
- ☐ 2013

How often do you visit each of the following?

	How Often Do you Visit/Check?					
	Daily	Once a Week	Once a Month	Once every 6 months or so	Never	Don't Know
LinkedIn International Business Group	()	()	()	()	()	()
Twitter Feed	()	()	()	()	()	()
JAMK IB Blog	()	()	()	()	()	()
FaceBook Page (JAMK IB Alumni)	()	()	()	()	()	()

Comments about content. Both positive and negative (constructive please) feedback is welcome.

Which of the following things have you done?

	Yes	No	I don't know
I have 'Liked' the JAMK	()	()	()

IB Alumni Facebook
Page

Become a blog
subscriber

☐ ☐ ☐

Become a twitter
follower

☐ ☐ ☐

Are there any other social media platforms you think we ought to use? Maybe there's something we already use that you think is useless. List any ideas below and why you'd think they'd be good.

Where did you hear about the IB alumni network?

- ☐ I've never heard of it. This is the first time.
- ☐ Through the first questionnaire
- ☐ From Alison Directly
- ☐ From a friend
- ☐ I accidentally found it
- ☐ Other, how? _____

Which of the following would you really like to see happen? Choose all that apply.

- ☐ Printed Newsletter sent to your home
- ☐ Annual reunions at JAMK
- ☐ E-mail newsletters
- ☐ Keep the blog running (<http://wordpress.jamkib.com>)
- ☐ Keep the JAMK IB Alumni Twitter account active
- ☐ Keep the Facebook JAMK IB Alumni page active and open
- ☐ A personal invite to the Annual Spring Ball
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

I'd love to hear your input. How can we do things better? How can we make things more interesting? What are we doing wrong? Your input matters!

APPENDIX 4 – Open Feedback, Second Phase Questionnaire

Comments about content. Both positive and negative (constructive please) feedback is welcome.

Never heard of these, so how could I visit them? Have they been advertised to the IB alumni? I don't recall hearing about them either when I was studying in the IB.

I don't have profile in facebook and don't use in general this channel of social media.

The Facebook page is the easiest one to follow. The LinkedIn group kind of disappears in the flow of other feeds and stuff, but this depends on the settings and LinkedIn platform tho.

So far the information posted up on these sites hasn't been awfully useful to me.

good information about possible job opportunities

I do not follow them at all, but now that I know they exist, I will put effort into Facebook page at least.

I didn't know they existed.

Biggest issue with these platforms is the fact that there is no real communication. It is more about pushing info from JAMK to the alumni in the form of linked news. No interaction. Bad.

I cannot help so much, since I haven't been active in IB social network.

my own background: double degree student from German university who spented 2 semesters at JAMK (exchange)

I am currently quite indifferent about the content, since I am not actively following.

Good plus

I think blog was good, but I haven't checked that for a long time. Also I haven't been much in FB or Twitter or haven't noticed LinkedIn group. So can't say much, because I have not been active.

It is quite hard to comment on the content, as I am not very familiar with most of these pages. Personally I would say that LinkedIn is the best way of communication for JAMK IB alumni matters, I personally at least use Facebook only for communication with friends and family so not necessarily the best place for me to receive information on alumni news.

Content is good. No comments there. Perhaps you could add a few stories here and there about methodologies (and new theories) about more recent stuff out on the business markets.

World like to know about linked and Facebook

No comments since I am not familiar with neither one.

Didn't know of the existence of these sources.

I'm not sure if I even know these things existed.

didn't know such existed

Are there any other social media platforms you think we ought to use? Maybe there's something we already use that you think is useless. List any ideas below and why you'd think they'd be good.

I don't think more than Facebook and Twitter, you should have more due to confusion of alumni that might occur, especially in concern with the spams and junk mails. Blogging and Facebook are doing the same stuff, I think it is best to just stick to only one. You can do blogging on the web and link that to FB or TW.

Google+ as you can do Hangouts, which would be a cool way for a class reunion.

Just create the new intranet for JAMK and create an extranet platform for alumni and strategic partners.

I think you're already there where people are, but I don't know what would be the best channel to reach them.

but will start following the blog and twitter now that I know that they exist!

I think they are all good platforms, perhaps they just need more promotion.

Vimeo could be good

**Where did you hear about the IB alumni network?
Other, how?**

jamk.fi - I actively find the network

I received a forwarded email from another alumni

Juha Saukkonen

**Which of the following would you really like to see happen? Choose all that apply.
Other, please specify**

reunions every 5 years

I think an annual reunion might be too often, but once every 4-5 years might be ok. As we are getting older time starts to speed up ;)

I'd love to hear your input. How can we do things better? How can we make things more interesting? What are we doing wrong? Your input matters!

By having exchanged students post the matters on the web, writing about personal experiences aboard, what IB has given to you. All of these are interesting to hear.

For international alumnus like me (there should be many), it's hard to catch up with other alumni located in Finland. And alumni network lives when there are many interaction among alumni members. Shall we first do some events through the internet? First of all, alumni need to know each

other. Please find a way to encourage alumni to introduce, update about their career or so. Then go to second, we can do some discussion on hot topic, or whatsoever.

- Theme Alumni meetings at JAMK - Professional seminars - Network meetings with companies representatives - Online courses for Alumni (could be for extra charges)

There are a lot of stuff on the social media and it's rather hard to follow and notice all the notification and feeds. Thus, the visibility of the feeds or what ever you post there is important plus, one should not post too often as well. I'd rather read something "real" than irrelevant stuff posted constantly.

Obviously it hasn't been marketed or advertised enough since I hardly know about this thing even though I'm very active user of Facebook and email and I check all the information carefully that has been sent to me.

I guess the challenge is how to make it interesting for all alumnis out there. For example, I've got a job so I won't be interested in job offers, etc but somebody who's struggling to find a job would be. Maybe personal interviews from alumnis?

Nothing specific comes to mind at the moment. I've been so busy for the last two years that I haven't had time to follow the blogs or twitter or Facebook. Anyway, it's great that there is so much effort to improve and update things!

Can't say yet, because I haven't been following any of the channels. Will get back to you on this later...

I would like to hear that how alumni can help current students and recent graduates to find work. Who should I contact in Jamk if positions become available.

Mailchimp would be a good tool to send Newsletters, these feel more personal and if sent quarterly wouldn't intrude too much. They could highlight content that's freely accessible (so probably not FB, but blog content) and encourage people to Like or Follow.

Personal meetings, use alumni as guest lecturers, invite alumni to offer students practical training, projects, thesis etc.

Please, keep me update (newsletters, etc.). My e-mail is ronnie.damonte@fi.ey.com. I have been having quite a good career during the last 8 years (Deloitte, Nokia and now EY) , so I would love to help JAMK IB in the near future.

I should spend some time in getting active to get to know the IBalumni because it seems to be quite interesting. Moreover I probably get informed about other students I got to know.

I would like to see more information/news related to start up business.

-

More study things in blogs. More famous theories and business cases and jocks.

I'm not sure if you're doing this already, but try to get as much stories from people that have graduated as possible. Would be interesting to see how people have managed life!

You're doing great ;) It just kills me that I dont have more time and energy to contribute. I hope other people have more of that..

I am sorry to say that I have not been familiar with the JAMK social platforms and from now on I will familiarized myself with them. Perhaps more active promotion from these social platforms could help the awareness of others like me.

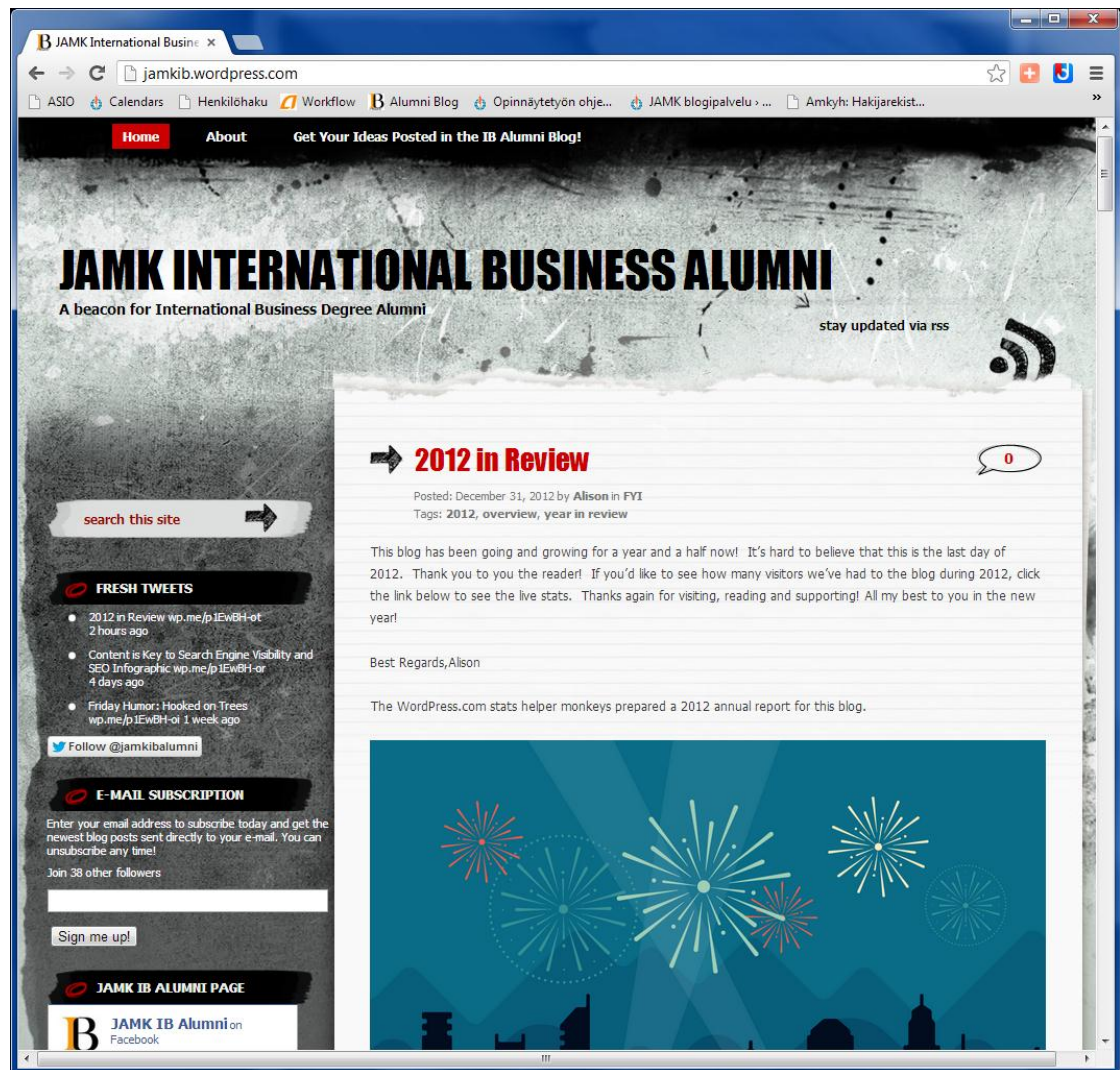
I will now probably look more into the IB Alumni pages! thanks for the info!

Unfortunately it is very difficult to follow situation nowadays. All of the information services are linked to some specific resources (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) where I do not have even account. As for me, most useful way will be some newsletters to email with brief outlook. Then, if you really got interesting with the topic, you will visit the page in any case :)

I'm personally not interested in school stuff now that I have finally gotten out of there. I do understand that many people want to keep up with these kinds of things and you never know if I end up checking out these things some day.

market these efforts

APPENDIX 5 – Screenshots



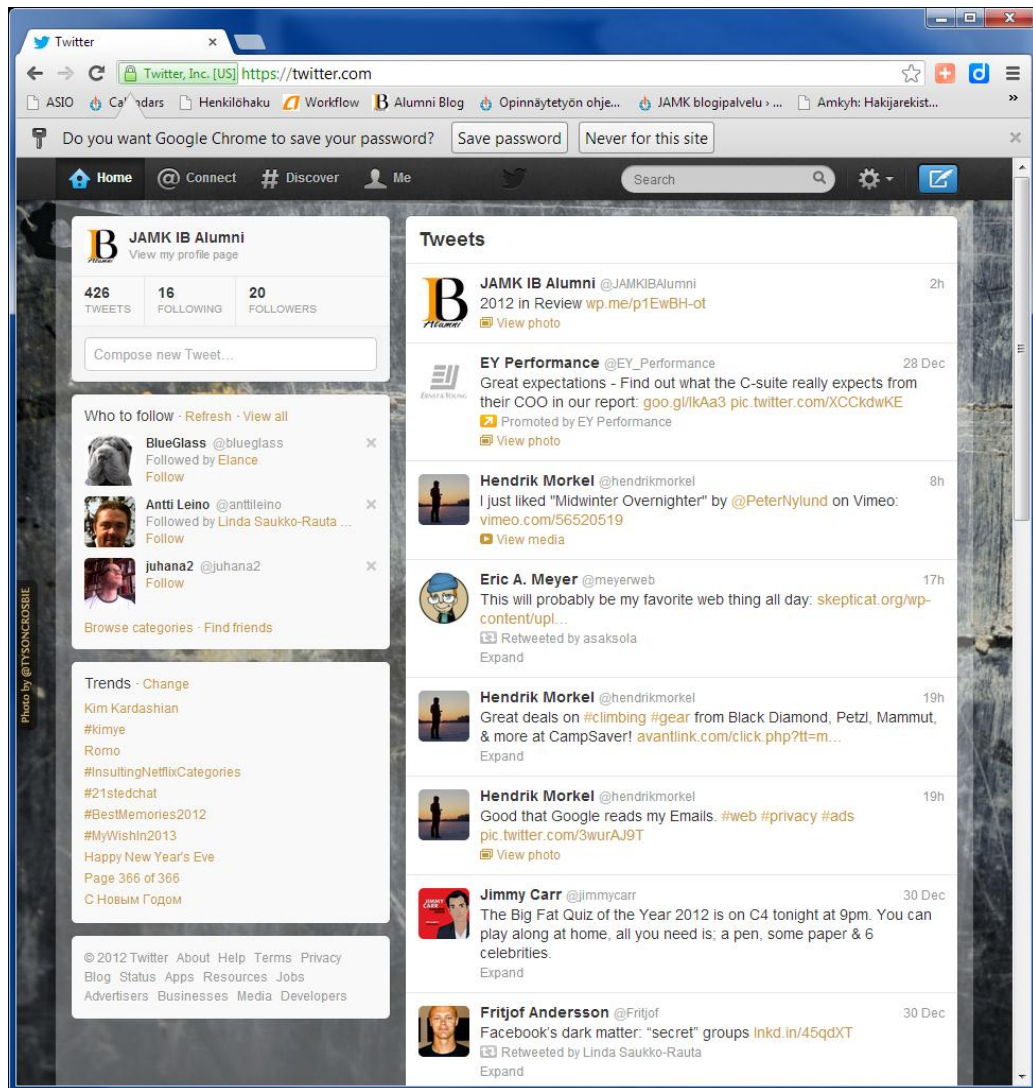
Screenshot of IB Blog (December 31, 2012)

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn web browser window. The address bar displays the URL: www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3977933&trk=hb_side_g. The LinkedIn navigation bar at the top includes the logo, account type (Basic), and various navigation links like Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox, Companies, News, and More. The main header of the page identifies the group as "International Business", a subgroup of the Alumni Network of JAMK University of Applied Sciences. Below the header, there are tabs for Discussions, Members, Promotions, Jobs, Search, Manage, and More. The "Discussions" tab is active, showing a "Start" section with a discussion icon and a text input field. Below this, the "Latest Discussions" section lists several posts, each with a RSS icon, a title, a source URL, and a timestamp. The posts include: "Content is Key to Search Engine Visibility and SEO Infographic" (posted 3 days ago), "Friday Humor: Hooked on Trees" (posted 9 days ago), "These Are The Biggest PR Disasters Of 2012" (posted 12 days ago), and "5 Must-Haves for Social Media Management" (posted 13 days ago). On the right side of the page, there are three additional sections: "Latest Updates" showing recent group members (Katjaana Hannula, Maria Zelenina, and Monika Nižnik-Klocek), "Ads by LinkedIn Members" featuring "Human And Social Services" and "Free World Education Data", and "Group Statistics" which includes a bar chart showing the hierarchy (Director, Manager, Entry) and a large number "2,750" representing the group size.

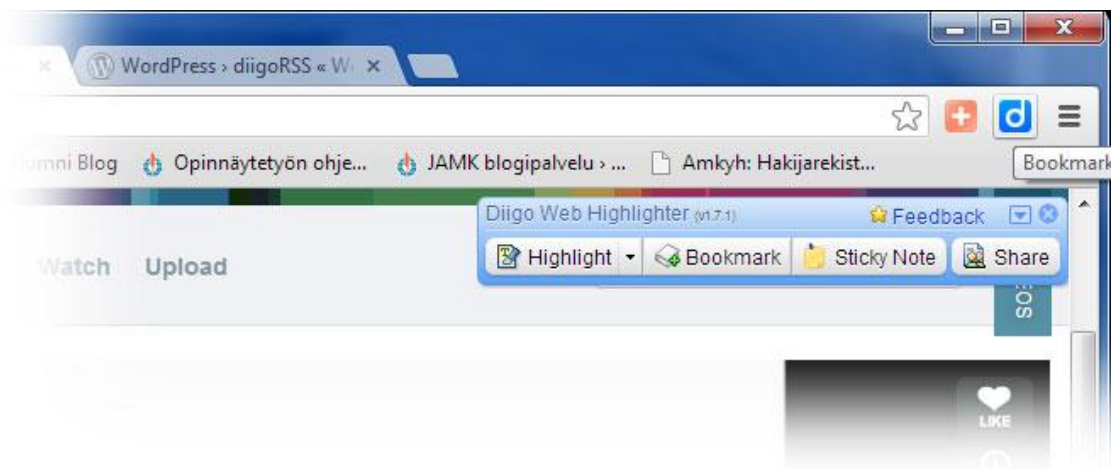
Screenshot of LinkedIn Subgroup created for JAMK IB Alumni



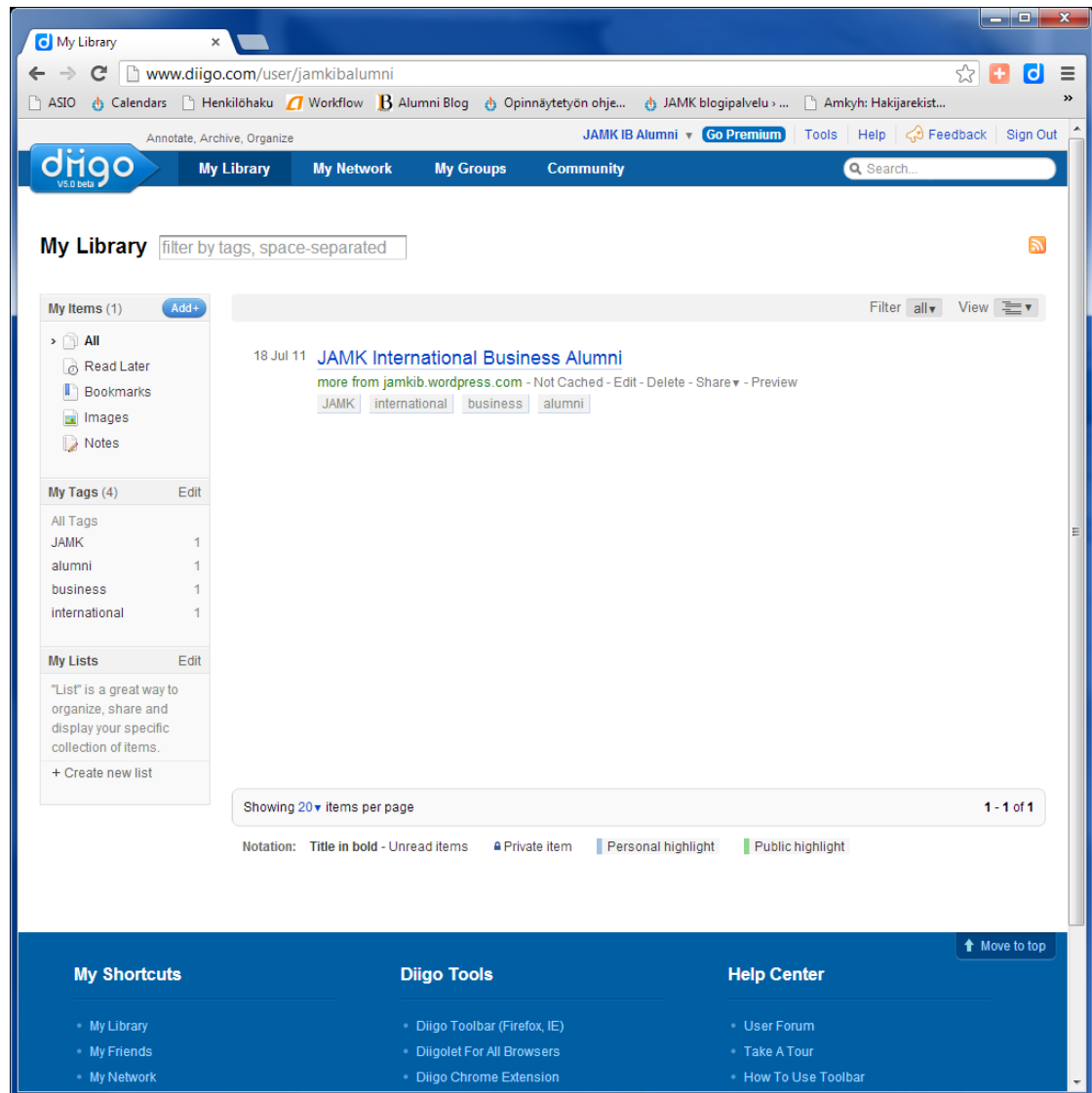
Screen shot of JAMK IB alumni Facebook page (December 31, 2012)



Screenshot JAMK IB Alumni Twitter feed (December 31, 2012)



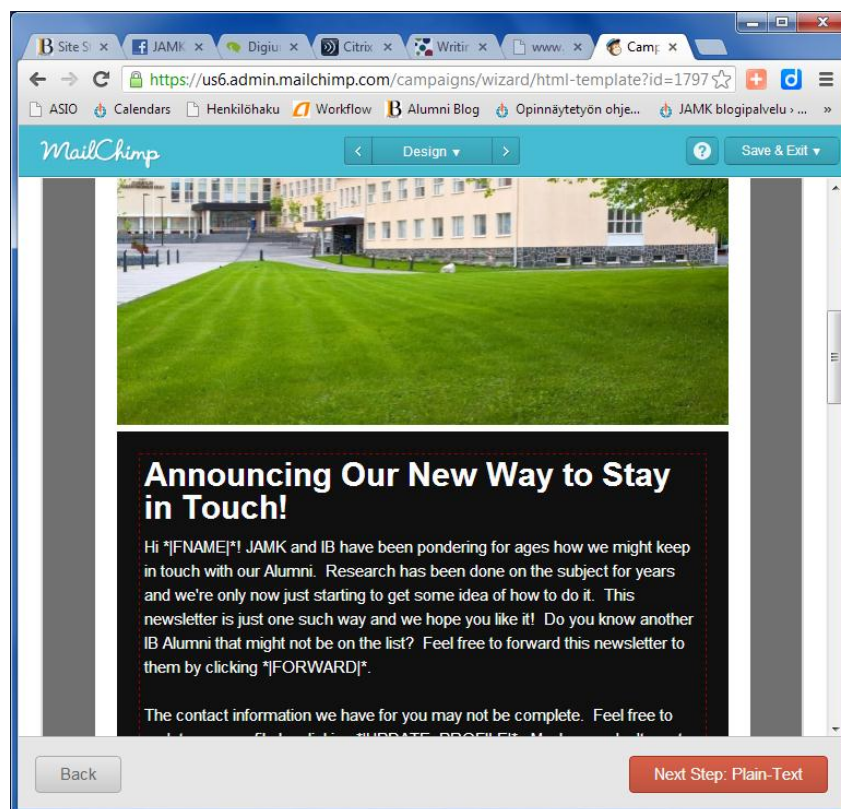
Diigo Web Highlighter add-on for Chrome



Screenshot of Diigo (December 31, 2012)



Global readership by country for the year of 2012. The darker the shade of the country, the higher the readership of that country.



Screenshot of Mailchimp WYSIWYG newsletter creation interface.